A

LETTER

TO A

BISHOP,

Concerning Some

IMPORTANT DISCOVERIES

IN

Philoſophy and Theology.

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The Whole

WORKS

Of the Right Honourable

DUNCAN FORBES,

Late Lord Preſident of the Court of Seſſion.

Now firſt Collected.

Containing,

I. Thoughts on Religion, Natural and Revealed.

II. A Letter to a Biſhop, concerning ſome important Diſcoveries in Philoſophy and Theology.

III. Reflexions on the Sources of Incredulity with regard to Religion.

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A LETTER TO A BISHOP, &c.

MY LORD,

ATHEISM, Deiſm, and the whole train of opinions that attend what is commonly called Freethinking, flow from a ſettled diſbelief and contempt of Revelation.

THIS diſbelief is in a great meaſure owe-ing to the want of a fair and unprejudiced examination of the numerous and various proofs and evidences, that ſupport the truth and authority of the Scriptures.

BUT it is chiefly grounded on a firm perſuaſion, that human underſtanding is a ſufficient guide to man, and the teſt and meaſure of all matters of belief; ſo that we are at liberty, nay indeed bound, to reject whatever does not anſwer thoſe notions, which, by what we call reaſoning, we have fixed.

THAT modern diſcoveries, the fruit of genius and application only, have fixed and determined to a certainty the laws and cauſes of the principal operations, and phænomena of Nature, which were wholly unknown to the antients, and miſtaken by the authors of the books which are received as Revelation.

THAT therefore theſe books, ſo far as they give accounts of Nature, contrary to experience, and demonſtration reſulting from it, are falſe; and conſequently can, in no other point, paſs for infallible.

THAT the Scriptures relate a great many marvellous, improbable, nay incredible tranſactions, which do not ſeem to be directed to any purpoſe, ſuited to ſovereign Wiſdom and Goodneſs; and to contain a world of Inſtitutions, laws, obſervances, and ceremonies, which to Freethinkers appear abſurd, frivolous, and ridiculous; unworthy the ſuppoſed Author,

Author, and improper to attain the propoſed end.

WHEN any apparent miſtake in Natural Philoſophy is objected to the Scriptures, the anſwer commonly given is, in my opinion, ſtronger than the objection, according to the views of the diſputants on either ſide; that theſe things, being incidental only, are ſpoken *ad captum humanum*, and accommodated to the underſtandings of thoſe, to whom they were delivered; though, I confeſs, it would be a much more comfortable anſwer, if it could be ſaid, and proved, that the things objected to are true.

WHEN Freethinkers ground themſelves upon any improbable, or, as they will call it, incredible or abſurd relation, there is no anſwering them without bringing together, and laying before them, the whole evidence that ſerves for ſupporting Revelation; which, when poiſed in the ſcale againſt all objections of this kind that ever have been made, in my opinion, may certainly outweigh them: but, the misfortune is, the objection glares, can be taken in by a very moderate capacity, and requres no learning, and but little attention to comprehend it; whereas, without

long ſtudy, great learning, cloſe attention, and a diſpaſſionate and unprejudiced examination, the evidence for Revelation cannot be collected and weighed. Whoever therefore lets in the ſtrength of the objection, and, for want of learning or attention (not to ſpeak of natural prejudices) either cannot, or will not give himſelf the trouble to collect and weigh the proofs on the other ſide, muſt neceſſarily give it againſt Revelation, and fortify himſelf in his incredulity.

AND to this it is owing that all thoſe, who, in this indolent and luxurious Age, pretend to politeneſs, and aim at knowledge, and the reputation of underſtanding and ſcience, without any expence of learning or labour, and without any interruption to their pleaſures or purſuits, take up with objections againſt Revelation, without the painful examination of the evidence that ſupports it, look down with contempt on believers, as a parcel of prejudiced Enthuſiaſts, and inliſt themſelves with Freethinkers, as the honeſteſt, wiſeſt ſet of men living.

AND when men, carried by pleaſures, or ſunk in indolence, ſettle once upon theſe notions, every inſtitution, ordinance, or ceremony,

ceremony, appointed in Scripture, for which Chriſtians cannot, or do not, aſſign an adequate uſe or end, becomes freſh matter of objection, and tends to rivet and confirm Infidelity.

THIS facility of receiving and taking up with objections, and the criminal indolence and neglect of thoſe who do not give themſelves the trouble to examine, with due care, the merits of the anſwer, has been long complained of, and lamented by all who wiſh well to mankind, but hitherto in vain: ſomething more than argument muſt intervene to cool them in the purſuit of pleaſures, to rouſe their attention to their real intereſt, and to determine them to ſearch with care and induſtry, before they will let in ſo much as a ſuſpicion that their objections are ill-founded; or thoſe objections muſt be overthrown by ſome other and ſhorter mean than the complicated evidence for the authority of Revelation, elſe the objectors will never give themſelves the trouble to diſcover their miſtakes.

SOME time ago, as my thoughts were employed in theſe diſagreeable reflections, a ſet of books were ſent me by my bookſeller to look over; the titles were odd, and provoked my curioſity: *Moſes's Principia*, *parts*

1ſt and 2d; *An Eſſay toward a Natural Hiſtory of the Bible: Moſes's —— ſine Principio*; *A new Account of the Confuſion of Tongues, and the Names and Attributes of the Trinity of the Gentiles*; were inſcribed at the head of theſe ſeveral Tracts, all publiſhed ſucceſſively, in different years, from the year 1724: And theſe are followed by another Work, that was publiſhed very lately, entitled, *A Treatiſe of Power, Eſſential and Mechanical.*

RUNNING over theſe books curſorily, I readily perceived the Author propoſed to prove that the *Hebrew* ſcriptures had never been, and are not now, truly tranſlated, or perfectly underſtood by thoſe who pretend to be learned: that, rightly tranſlated and underſtood, they compriſe a perfect ſyſtem of Natural Philoſophy, as well as a complete body of Theology and Religion: that they no where aſſert any of thoſe heterodoxes in philoſophy, which modern obſervations ſhew to be ſuch; but, on the contrary, teach and aver every thing that has been truly gathered from obſervations or experiments, recent or antient; and propoſe, and explain mechanical principles different from, nay in many things diametrically oppoſite to, thoſe now received; by which all the various operations in nature

are performed, and which tally with, and can be ſupported by, every obſervation and experiment that hath been truly taken and made: that the ſeeming abſurdities, with which the Scriptures are charged, either are not in the original, and are therefore owing to the ignorance or perverſe deſign of the tranſlators; or are, when rightly underſtood, no blemiſhes, but beauties in the Revelation: and that the many inſtitutions, declarations, and obſervances, which appear frivolous to thoſe who do not underſtand them, are the product of perfect Wiſdom and Contrivance, neceſſary to explain and preſerve the religion inculcated in the Old Teſtament, and fit to prepare for that which afterwards was delivered in the New.

BUT, though I eaſily gathered this to be the Author's propoſal and intention; yet, upon looking into particulars, I found the proofs depended ſo much on the true conſtruction of the *Hebrew* language, to which I was very much a ſtranger; and on an exact knowledge of the experiments and obſervations that have been made on the works of Nature, with which I am but very little acquainted; that his reaſoning, almoſt every where, appeared

to me intricate and arbitrary; and I was not without ſome doubts that the obſcurity I complained of proceeded partly from deſign, for reaſons that I could not penetrate.

FINDING, from my own want of knowledge, ſuch difficulty in examining the proofs offered to ſupport propoſitions of ſuch univerſal import to mankind, and which I wiſhed ſo earneſtly to diſcover to be concluſive and true; I reſorted to ſeveral learned men of my acquaintance, ſkilled in the antient language, on which the Author grounds himſelf; and converſant in the obſervations and experiments, on which the modern philoſophy of Nature is built, not doubting but they had conſidered, and framed a certain judgment of his works: but, to my great ſurpriſe, though all of them had heard of, and ſeen ſome part of thoſe tracts, yet not one of them had given himſelf the trouble to examine them. They complained of the intricacy and abſtruſeneſs of the Author's way of writing, and concluded him ſo, certainly, to be half-learned, viſionary, and in the wrong, becauſe his notions were contradictory to what they, by long ſtudy, had adopted and made their own; that they laid aſide his books without any farther enquiry,

enquiry, as what did not deſerve, or would not anſwer the trouble of an examination.

THOUGH I could have relied on theſe gentlemen's judgment, if they had conſidered the Author's opinions and arguments with any care; yet, finding that they had cenſured without examination, and not being able to meet with any perſon whatever, who had given himſelf the trouble of canvaſſing with due attention his arguments, on a matter of ſo general concern; I rubbed up the little *Hebrew* I had, and addreſſed myſelf to a more careful peruſal of the books; not with any hopes of being able finally to judge of the certainty of his ſuppoſed diſcoveries, but with a deſign to collect the general drift and tendency of his reaſoning, to the end I might lay it before thoſe who are infinitely better able to judge than my ſelf; and who, from ſeeing ſcattered hints brought together, might be invited to conſider the matter more ſeriouſly; to condemn and refute any thing that is falſe, and to approve, ſupport, and propagate every thing that is true. For I cannot help thinking it ſome reproach to the curioſity, as well as religious zeal of the Clergy of this nation, that ſentiments ſo new and ſurpriſing, in matters of religion, ſhould have been

been ſtalking about for ſo many years, without meeting with any examination, approbation, or confutation.

To give your Lordſhip, then, (from whoſe great proficiency in the Eaſtern learning, the only foundation of Scripture-knowledge; and your thorough knowledge of natural things, from whence all ideas of beings and things inviſible are conveyed; your known readineſs to forward any work in favour of religion; eſpecially a work of this kind to eſtabliſh the true meaning of the Scriptures, much wanted, I expect a ſolution of my doubts;) an account of theſe things that have made the greateſt impreſſion on me, in the order in which I have been able to comprehend them.

The author affirms (what I think moſt of the learned world, at preſent, agree in) that pointing in the *Hebrew* writings is a modern invention, ſome centuries later than the days of our Saviour, contrived, after the language ceaſed to be commonly ſpoken, by the Jews, to favour their own conſtructions, and therefore of no authority to determine the ſenſe of any word, but for that reaſon to be avoided.

That, as the underſtanding, ſo the proper and original ſenſe of many of the *Hebrew* words

words uſed to expreſs matters of importance in philoſophy and theology, was, in ſome degree, altered or loſt, when the children of *Iſrael* made defections from the true religion, before the *Babyloniſh* Captivity; ſo, in the diſperſion that attended that Captivity, the pure *Hebrew* was altogether beat out of common uſage, and the knowledge of it remained only amongſt the few that were learned, and attentive to the true religion and philoſophy that was delivered by *Moſes*, and the other inſpired writers.

THAT the *Greek* tranſlation, commonly called the *Septuagint*, being made long after return the from the *Babyloniſh* Captivity, when the genuine ſenſe of the *Hebrew* words was, in a great meaſure, loſt, is extremely imperfect; partly, as the *Greek* language is deſtitute of words to convey the full and proper meaning of the *Hebrew* expreſſions; partly, as the tranſlators might have been ignorant, and might have accommodated their interpretation to their own views, in philoſophy and theology, which were corrupted; and partly, as they durſt not (had their underſtanding been better) tranſlate, in ſome points, truly, for fear of provoking the *Egyptians*, in whoſe country they compoſed their tranſlation; and

whoſe

whoſe Gods, had they given a faithful tranſlation, they muſt to the laſt degree vilify and affront.

THAT, nevertheleſs, this and other tranſlations ſo fully diſcover the genius of the *Hebrew* language, and ſo certainly tranſlate words, when employed about matters that the interpreters were under no byaſs to render falſly, that a key from thence may be made for conſtruing, with certainty, the whole *Hebrew* ſcriptures.

THE Author avers that the *Hebrew* language (from which, it ſeems pretty certain, the *Phœnician*, the *Chaldee*, the *Syriack*, the *Arabick*, the *Greek*, the *Latin*, and divers other branches were derived) was the original one; framed in Paradiſe, and with this particularity, that each root is taken from ſome particular beaſt, bird, plant, flower, or ſome other ſenſible object, and employed to repreſent ſome very obvious idea of action or condition raiſed by ſuch ſenſible object, from whence it is further carried to ſignify ſpiritual or mental things, of which we can frame ideas only by the help of material or bodily things.

HE denies that any one root in the whole language conveys ideas of a different meaning;

ing; and affirms that one, and but one, leading ſenſe runs through all the formation of the ſame root; contrary to the eſtabliſhed doctrine of the *Jews*, who, by variety of arbitrary pointings, aſcribe different and contradictory ſenſes very often to a word compoſed of the very ſame letters; with deſign, as our Author ſuggeſts, to darken the ſenſe of the Scriptures, chiefly, if not altogether, in thoſe points, which contain the knowledge of the Chriſtian ſyſtem, and the religion of the Heathens.

AFTER obſerving that there is not one line of authentick *Hebrew* left in the whole world, but what is compriſed in the books of the Old Teſtament, our Author inſiſts that there is one, and but one, certain way of decyphering it, that is, by comparing every word in all the various combinations and ſentences in which it appears, and gathering from thence the leading or original idea it was intended to raiſe; which is ever, from ſuch compariſon, with certainty to be collected.

HE ſays, that, though all the modern *Hebrecians* had the uſe of very accurate concordances, that might have helped them forward in this inveſtigation, yet their progreſs was

was marr'd by the blind reſpect they paid to the falſe or fraudulent pointings of their adverſaries the *Jews*; and that he, ſhaking himſelf looſe from thoſe fetters, has been able to ſettle the genuine meaning of every important word in the whole Old Teſtament.

AND, from the fix'd and perpetual meaning of the words ſo explained, he ſays he is able to ſhew that the Scriptures, however diſguiſed and disfigured by the tranſlation, are written with the utmoſt accuracy, propriety, and truth; that they contain a perfect ſyſtem of Natural Philoſophy, and, upon that grafted, a complete ſyſtem of Theology, ſo far as mankind is capable of receiving that ſublime knowledge, and unerring rules for all religious ſervice and belief.

THROUGH the whole of his works, he attempts to define, and determine the true ſenſe of a great many words uſed by *Moſes* and the Prophets, in the deſcription of the formation of the world, and the preſervation and ſupport of all the operations that are carried on in it; he avers that the deſcriptions, by them given in theſe words, contain a mechanical account of all the powers, and of the operations carried on in, and by this material ſyſtem; and he inſiſts that all the

the phænomena in Nature can be accounted for by the principles laid down by them.

BUT, to give you as clear a view, as I am able, of the further deſign of our Author; He ſuppoſes it will not be denied to him, that Man, a compound of ſoul and body, cannot frame to himſelf, or compare ideas, but ſuch as are taken from ſenſible objects: what powers or faculties the ſoul might have, if detached from the body, we cannot know; but, as we are now made, we upon moderate reflection diſcover, that the ſoul of man, in this ſtate, has not power to frame to itſelf, or to receive any idea that does not come from the ſenſes, at leaſt from ſome feeling or ſenſation communicated to it by, or through the body.

THE ſun, the light, the air, the earth, the body of man, we can frame ideas of, as we can of the manner of their acting, and being acted upon; but the ſoul, which perceives and compares thoſe ideas, we can frame no manner of idea of, nor of its manner of acting, or being acted upon.

AND we, who know that we have no capacity to conceive any idea of any thing that does not affect our ſenſes, muſt conclude that our not perceiving is no proof

that

that there may not be millions of different beings and ſubſtances round us, beſides thoſe that affect our ſenſes, of which, and of their powers or actions, we can know nothing.

As man has not the leaſt idea of the matter or ſubſtance of his own ſoul, or of its manner of acting, or being acted upon; ſo he has no capacity of reaſoning about it, by comparing it with things perceived: he cannot, for example, compare it with ſpace or figure; he cannot ſay it is, or is not, comprehended within limits of any kind; he cannot ſay it moves, or does not move, or at all imagine how it is ſupported, or acts.

We perceive how a ſolid body is moved by the impulſe of another ſolid body, or of a fluid, and is continued in motion ſo long as the impulſe laſts; and we can conceive how a plant, or animal, may be ſupported, may grow, or decay, mechanically, by the operation of different material agents: but we can have no conception how the ſoul acts on itſelf, or on matter, how it is acted upon, or how it is ſupported.

And, being ſo much in the dark concerning the principal part of ourſelves, the only know-

knowing thing in us, it is no wonder we ſhould be incapable of framing any juſt idea of that inviſible ſpiritual Being, by which we, and every other created thing, were made.

OUR Author thinks that, by the light of nature only, men could not poſſibly have diſcovered whether this material ſyſtem, which, he ſays, is ſo framed, as to be a ſelf-moving machine, exiſted from eternity, and was the cauſe and ſupport of itſelf, and of every thing in it; or whether it was contrived, and the parts of it put together, by an higher hand. But, be that as it will, and were it even to be ſuppoſed that man, by thorough obſervation, and by a juſt induction, could diſcover *à poſteriori* the exiſtence of ſome eternal ſelf-exiſtent cauſe, whoſe work this creation is; our Author ſeems to be well warranted, when he affirms that it is preſumptuous in man, becauſe it is impoſſible, to frame ſuch an idea of this inviſible agent, from his own ſcanty notions and apprehenſions, as ſhall be the ſtandard and teſt, by which to try every thing that is, or may be, in queſtion concerning the Firſt Cauſe.

MAN may, for example, be in the right to attribute all poſſible perfections to this Being; but, 'till he can determine what is abſolute perfection (taking in the circle of all poſſible beings, their actions and attributes) it is impoſſible for him with juſtice to conclude, that, becauſe this or that ſeems to him to be perfection, it therefore, according to the meaſure which he conceives of it, belongs to the Author of Nature.

AND though it ſhould be admitted that man, by the light of nature, could diſcover the dependence of this created ſyſtem on a ſelf-exiſtent Creator, yet it is certain he cannot frame to himſelf any idea of that Being, his nature, ſubſtance, powers, or manner of exiſting or acting; and that, if there is any knowledge of ſuch things amongſt men, it muſt come from ſome other ſource than that of nature and obſervation.

FROM this ſtate of man's nature the Author infers one indiſpenſible neceſſity for Revelation; if God intended that man ſhould know him, his goodneſs, power, wiſdom, and mercy; ſhould make returns of gratitude, love, adoration, and obedience; and ſhould conform himſelf to that order, which by the divine will was eſtabliſhed: and that

that the knowledge of every thing that was to be known, and believed, was revealed, our Author inſiſts, will demonſtrably be proved, when what is revealed, is underſtood and conſidered.

A REVELATION therefore, our Author inſiſts, was made by God to man, at two different periods; the firſt juſt after the Creation, and upon the Fall; the ſecond in the wilderneſs to the *Iſraelites*, and on various occaſions afterwards, by different methods of communication, not to mention the appearances to the Patriarchs: to reſtore the knowledge of the firſt revelation, which had been pretty much loſt, or miſunderſtood, and to fix and aſcertain it by writing (a method, as the Author will have it, then firſt revealed) ſo as it ſhould never after be obliterated or left dubious.

To begin with the laſt. The firſt thing that is met with in the books of *Moſes* is an aſſertion that God created the heavens and the earth, which is followed by a particular account of the order and manner of the formation of all that was created, 'till the work was perfected. After which, God is ſaid to have reſted; and our Author aſſerts, that it is alſo ſaid, the perfect machine, then

left to itſelf, carried on all the operations in this ſyſtem, by certain known laws of mechaniſm, explained by *Moſes*, and throughout the Scriptures by the other inſpired penmen.

THE ſum of what our Author avers to be the doctrine of the Scriptures, on this head, is, that, beſides the differently formed particles, of which this earth, and the ſeveral metals, minerals, and other ſolid ſubſtances in it, and in the other ſolid orbs, are compoſed, God at firſt created all that ſubtile fluid which now is, and from the Creation has been, in the condition of fire, light, or air, and goes under the name of the Heavens.

THE particles of this fluid, (which our Author calls atoms) when they are ſingle and uncompounded, are inconceivably minute, and ſo ſubtile as to pervade the pores of all ſubſtances whatever, whether ſolid, or fluid, without any great difficulty or reſiſtance: when they are puſhed forward in ſtraight lines, by the action of fire, or are reflected or refracted in ſtraight lines, they produce light, and are ſo called; but, when the interpoſition of any opaque body hinders their progreſs in ſtraight Lines, they paſs, but ceaſe to produce light.

THESE particles or atoms, which, when moving in ſtraight lines, produce light, and, if collected and put into another ſort of motion, would produce heat and fire, are, as our Author inſiſts, when the force impelling them ceaſes to act with vigour, and when their motion is retarded, ſo made, that they are apt to adhere in ſmall maſſes or grains, which the Author calls ſpirit or air; and is of the ſame kind and texture with that air, which we daily breathe, and which we feel in wind when it blows.

THE ſun, which our Author places at the centre of this ſyſtem, is an orb included in a vaſt collection of this ſubtile matter in the action of fire, which continually melts down all the air that is brought into it by the powerful action of the firmament or expanſion, hereafter to be explained, into the ſubtile matter juſt mentioned; and with an immenſe force ſends forth, in perpetual ſtreams of light, this ſame ſubtile matter, ſo melted down, to the circumference of this ſyſtem, which the Author ſays is bounded, as he avers the ſpace comprehended within it is abſolutely full.

THE matter thus melted down at the orb of the ſun into light muſt, as every thing is

full, either ſtand ſtill, or make its way outwards to the circumference, being forced by the particles, which are concreted into air at the utmoſt extremities; and return towards the ſun, where the fluid being moſt ſubtile gives leaſt reſiſtance, and take up the place that the light left.

AND therefore this endleſs uninterrupted flux of matter from the ſun in light, in place of being an expence that ſhould deſtroy that orb (which our Author takes to be an inſupportable objection to Sir *Iſaac Newton*'s ſcheme) is the very means of preſerving it, and every thing elſe in this ſyſtem, in its action and vigour, by preſſing back perpetual ſupplies of air to be melted down into light, and thereby produces a continual circulation. Theſe perpetual fluxes or tides of matter outwards and inwards, in every point, from the centre to the circumference, mechanically, and neceſſarily, as our Author inſiſts, produce that conſtant gyration in the earth and the planets round their own centres, and round the ſun; and he avers, though he has not yet thought fit to explain it, that the ſame principle, with ſome circumſtances, ariſing from the ſituation and fluxes of light coming

coming from the other orbs, will account alſo for the motions of the moon.

BESIDES the rotation of the orbs, the Author affirms that the adverſe motions of the light puſhing towards the circumference, and the air puſhing towards the centre with immenſe force, form a general expanſion (as he tranſlates the word rendered firmament) which brings that ſtreſs or compreſſure on all bodies it meets with, that binds together ſolids, keeps fluids as they were, cauſes the variation of times and ſeaſons, the raiſing of water, the production of vegetables and animals, and in ſhort produces all the effects falſly aſcribed to gravity or attraction; continues motion without the aſſiſtance of the unmechanical principle of projection; produces, ſupplies, and ſupports vegetables, fruits, and animals; in ſhort, produces almoſt all the effects and phænomena in nature.

THESE are ſome of the out-lines of our Author's philoſophy, very repugnant, indeed, to the notions commonly received; but the authorities, by which he avers he can ſupport them, are two, and they are pretty conſiderable.

FIRST, He ſays that *Moſes* and the Prophets, who, by divine authority, were to reveal and explain to mankind how the operations in this ſyſtem were carried on, have in plain terms ſaid ſo. And,

SECONDLY, He affirms that he can, by comparing every true obſervation and experiment that have at any time been made by the Royal Society, or its members, or by any foreign ſocieties of learned men, and by a great many obſervations and experiments made by himſelf, to which the curious have hitherto very little attended, with the ſyſtem of philoſophy revealed in the Scriptures, ſhew that all the various phænomena of nature are to be accounted for mechanically thereby; and that the modern ſyſtems, as well as all others not taken from the Scriptures, are falſe, abſurd, and unmechanical.

IT is becauſe this looks highly improbable, if not impoſſible, to moſt men, that an examination of our Author's notions is neglected; but, as, in proportion as it is improbable, it would confirm the Scriptures, ſhould it be found true; I confeſs my deſire is the greater that the men qualified to judge would examine it.

As it is extremely new, ſo, at firſt ſight, it ſeems odd that our Author ſhould ſuppoſe it neceſſary for the Creator to give to mankind a courſe of philoſophy, ſo to ſpeak; but, to remove this difficulty, he reaſons to this effect.

The end to which a rational diſcerning ſoul was given to man, was, that by the organs of the body he might perceive the beauty, the order, the harmony of nature; and thence receive ideas of the infinite wiſdom, power, and goodneſs of its Author, which ſhould lead to admiration, love, duty, dependence, adoration, acknowledgment, and a deſire of further knowledge, and viſion of what in this world man can take in by borrowed ideas only.

If the mechaniſm of nature had not been revealed to man, he poſſibly never would have diſcovered it to any certainty; at leaſt, would not have diſcovered it, for ages: and ſo long thoſe incentives to admiration, love, ſervice, and adoration, would have been wanting.

If the mechaniſm could have been underſtood, without the further diſcovery that this ſelf-moving machine is no more than an inanimate piece of clock-work, created, as well as put together, by the ſupreme, intelligent,

ligent, beneficent Being, it might have led man to place his admiration and worſhip on the machine, in place of him that made it, as the miſtaken part of mankind always did.

AND therefore, if, before man could know the obligations he had to the ſupreme intelligent Being as his Redeemer, that is, before the Fall, the ſole light he could view him in, to produce admiration, love, duty, ſervice, and deſire of further union, was that of the infinitely wiſe, powerful, and beneficent Creator, and Supporter; it ſeems neceſſary to conclude that thoſe diſcoveries, which he could not make of himſelf, certainly were made to him.

AND this the rather, that, as man was the laſt piece formed of the creation, and as even his body was framed, before the ſoul, without which it could not perceive, was breathed into it, he could not have any mean to know how, where, or by whom or what, this world and all its tenants were produced; and, by the nature of the thing, could not in many ages, if at all, arrive at any knowledge of what was certainly intended to be the object of his meditation, and the cauſe of his love, duty, and ſervice.

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WHEREFORE, as it was neceſſary he ſhould ſpeedily be inſtructed, our Author thinks, *Moſes* has intimated to us that he was, in telling us that God was pleaſed to plant a garden for him, which he was to cultivate and keep. Our Author obſerving that gardens, amongſt the antient nations, and planted groves were ſacred, and places of worſhip; reflecting that it was but a poor employment for the chief of the creation to cultivate a garden, whilſt the earth, not being yet curſed, nor man doom'd to hard labour, might produce ſpontaneouſly fruits fit for him, eſpecially the trees, being of God's own planting; and obſerving that the words tranſlated *to till* and *to keep*, alſo properly ſignify *to worſhip* and *obſerve*; and taking in a great many other circumſtances, too numerous to be here recited, concludes that this garden was planted and dreſſed in the form of a plan or ſcheme, to ſhew the ſituations, motions, and actions of the heavenly bodies, and the powers in this ſyſtem, picture-ways or hieroglyphically, for man's comprehending and remembering more certainly the poſitions, motions, and influences of the heavenly bodies, and the actions of fire, light, and air, or, as our Author calls it, ſpirit, in circulation; ſeveral of

thoſe

thoſe bodies, or of the effects flowing from their motions or ſituations, and from the circulation of light and air, might be repreſented by trees of different forms, or growths; and the circulation might itſelf be repreſented by ſome of thoſe trees, or perhaps by the waters in *Eden*, which, by the four rivers, were plentifully furniſhed.

And as the Author underſtands this garden to have been for inſtruction, and the intent of *Moſes*'s recording that circumſtance to be, to let us know that man was ſo inſtructed; ſo he lays a pretty deal of weight upon another matter, related in the ſame hiſtory, of God's bringing the ſeveral animals before *Adam*, to the end he might give them proper names.

As the names *Adam* gave to animals were expreſſive of the chief talents or inſtincts of thoſe animals, and afterwards in the *Hebrew* language came generally to be roots for words to ſignify the paſſions, actions, or inclinations, which thoſe inſtincts or talents raiſed the ideas of; our Author concludes that God cauſed theſe animals to exhibit to *Adam*, for his information and inſtruction, their ſeveral qualities, particularities, and inſtincts, to help him

him forward in the knowledge that was to be communicated to him.

Our Author then perceiving clearly, that a ſyſtem of Natural Philoſophy, or a deſcription of this machine, was publiſhed by *Moſes*, when Revelation was, as he terms it, republiſhed in writing; obſerving that there was full as much occaſion, or rather more, for a diſcovery of this ſyſtem to *Adam*, before he had opportunities to make obſervations, than afterwards; and diſcovering the true ſenſe and meaning of thoſe intimations, that *Moſes* gives, concerning the tranſactions in the garden of *Eden*; concludes that *Adam* was by God inſtructed in the knowledge of the powers and operations of this ſyſtem, and of the duty and regard owing to the Author of it, as well as of ſo much of the nature, powers, and attributes of the Author and Creator of it, as the children of *Iſrael* were acquainted with, by the republication of Revelation by *Moſes*, in writing.

As to the manner of this firſt Revelation, our Author, proceeding upon the principles already mentioned, that man is incapable of any ideas but what are taken in by the ſenſes, concludes that God could not give to man, whilſt clogged with a body, the true idea of himſelf,

himſelf, or any otherways repreſent himſelf than by referring for a ſimilitude to that thing in this material ſyſtem, that bore the neareſt reſemblance in perfection, power, nature, and operation; and therefore he ſuppoſes (what he afterwards affirms he has proved) that, to give man ſome image or likeneſs of himſelf, he pointed to the machine by which this ſyſtem is ſupported; the heavens conſiſting of matter in three different conditions, fire, light, and air, or ſpirit, as the Author calls it, which mutually ſupport each other, and neceſſarily concur in the joint action of that powerful machine, by which every material thing is moved, ſupported, and preſerved; exhibiting thereby ſome ſimilitude, from whence an idea might be taken of his eſſence, perſonality, power, and manner of action.

As *Adam* gave names to all living creatures, and the uſe and intent of a name is to raiſe, in the hearer, an idea of the thing named; our Author ſuppoſes that every other creature that came within the cognizance of the firſt man had alſo a name given to it; and inſiſts that the heavens, or the machine, deſcribed as above, was by *Adam* called *The Names*, by way of eminence, to ſignify that they were the repreſentatives of the Deity, that

that from which the idea of him was to be taken: שם *Shem* in the *Hebrew* language ſignifies Name; and he avers that שמים *Shemim* is the maſculine plural of that noun, and ſignifies properly Names; and by this he underſtands that the heavens, or *Shemim*, were always thought of, and ſpoken of, by thoſe who were rightly informed by Revelation, as the repreſentation, or material object expreſſive of the Deity.

If mankind was thus inſtructed in the powers and operations of Nature, the leſſon would not ſoon, or eaſily, wear out; becauſe every obſervation, every ſymptom in nature would, day after day, juſtify it; but the fact, that this knowledge was revealed, might ſoon be forgotten by the ſucceeding generations of men, or be diſbelieved, and with it the knowledge of the inviſible Author of all. Men who ſaw this machine perfect and ſelf-moving might doubt whether it had not ſelf-exiſtence in it; and whether, as it was the immediate cauſe and producer of all their comforts, it was not the only powerful Being to which they had any obligations, and owed duty and ſervice; whence, by degrees, worſhip might be miſplaced, being transferred from the true inviſible God to the viſible repreſen-

preſentation of him, in which all power and perfection might be lodged, by the opinions of vain imaginary men, who forgot or diſregarded Revelation.

THAT this in fact was the caſe, that the early deſerters of the true God placed their worſhip and ſervice on the heavens, the Author proves at great length, and with great ſtrength of evidence, as a good deal of his reaſoning depends on it.

IF the Scriptures are to be deciſive in this point, it is put beyond doubt, by the many formal declarations that the crime of the nations, and of the apoſtate *Iſraelites*, was their ſerving the heavens, the Hoſt of heavens, the Queen of Heaven, as it is tranſlated; the Sun, Moon, and Stars; and falſe Gods, *Baal*, *Moloch*, *&c.* which our Author ſhews were repreſentations of ſome of the powers or attributes of the heavens; and by the many miracles wrought to convince mankind, that they miſplaced their worſhip, and that the inviſible God had thoſe powers under his command.

AND, were their credit in any degree queſtionable, ſuch remains as we have of the antient heathen worſhip would ſhew with abundant evidence, that, till they loſt the knowledge of their philoſophy, (which happened by

by accidents largely deſcribed by our author) they continually retained the powers or attributes of the heavens for the objects of their religious ſervice.

OUR Author admits that the more modern Heathens (by theſe he means the *Greeks* and *Romans*, and their ſucceſſors in point of time) who had loſt the knowledge of nature, loſt alſo the knowledge of the object of their worſhip, and the ſenſe of the very names, by which their gods were called or diſtinguiſhed; ſo that, though they adored the air, they knew not for what: but then he avers, that the antients (that is, all the nations that preceded the change of language, by which knowledge was retained) adored the heavens, or ſome powers in them, or attributes of them.

To this end he has collected the names of all the gods of the nations mentioned in Scripture, together with the names or titles of their temples, in his treatiſe of *the names and attributes of the Trinity of the Gentiles*, and has offered an examination and analyſis of thoſe names, together with ſome account of the ſervices paid to thoſe ſuppoſed deities, and the many reproaches made by the Prophets to their votaries and worſhippers; which, with great evidence, ſeems to ſhew that theſe gods

were indeed none other than the heavens, or ſome ſuppoſed powers in them.

THE very general adoration paid by the antients to the heavenly bodies, the worſhip of the ſun, of fire, of light, *&c.* that prevailed in the earlieſt times; the conjectural philoſophy of the late Heathens, the *Greeks*, and *Romans*, which centred in opinions, that by their *Jupiter*, *Apollo*, &c. was meant either the *æther*, or the ſun, or the active force of nature in general, juſtifies, to thoſe who value ſuch authorities, our Author's ſentiments.

OUR Author is out of humour with thoſe who fancy the antients ſuch idiots as to have worſhipped brutes, reptiles, inſects, or any inanimate things.

LET the worſhip in *Egypt* be an inſtance; the reſpect they had to *Apis*, to a bull or cow, was not at all paid to that animal. All mankind knows in relation to *Egypt*, becauſe their monuments were better preſerved than thoſe of other nations, that they wrote by hieroglyphicks; that is, that they expreſſed their ideas by repreſenting the figures of animals, or of inanimate things, of circles, triangles, *&c.* in ſuch ſeries and order, as to convey their meaning; in ſo doing, they muſt fix upon ſome things eaſily diſtinguiſhed, to repreſent

preſent what could not ſo eaſily be painted, or by figure expreſſed. And, if their fancy led them to expreſs the fire at the ſun by the front or head of a bull or heifer, the reſpect ſhewed to that animal was evidently meant to the fire at the ſun, and the *Egyptians* did not worſhip the bull or heifer, but the ſun; no more than in their hieroglyphical writing a bull or ſerpent was meant, when the figures of thoſe animals were repreſented.

OUR Author goes through a great many miſtakes of the moderns in this particular, which are diſhonourable to the underſtandings of the antients, and amongſt theſe takes notice particularly of one, *viz.* the reproach to the *Egyptians*, that they worſhipped an onion; and indeed the Scripture upbraids the *Iſraelites* with their ſtrong luſting after the onions of *Egypt*.

BUT our Author ſays the moderns will ceaſe to abuſe the antients on this ſcore, when they take the trouble to cut up the common onion, and to ſatisfy their own eyes that it conſiſts of ſeven different ſpheres, or *involucra*, one within another, in the way that the antients underſtood the ſeven ſpheres in this ſyſtem; and was therefore more proper than any other thing, that can be thought of, to

repreſent the ſolar ſyſtem in their hieroglyphical writings, and religious repreſentation.

He takes notice, that from the hieroglycal repreſentation of the heavens, or, perhaps, of fire, amongſt the *Egyptians*, by *Apis*, the *Iſraelites* calf of gold in the wilderneſs, and the brace of calves of *Jeroboam*, who had his education in *Egypt*, ſprang: not that the *Iſraelites* at firſt, or *Jeroboam* afterwards, dreamed of any powers or vertues in thoſe calves; but that they imagined, they put themſelves thereby under the protection of the heavens, of which they took that idol to be the approved emblem.

To all their hieroglyphical repreſentations of their Deity, he obſerves, they added a crown, by way of ornament or diſtinction, (as for much the ſame reaſon, though in another reſpect, which he elſewhere explains, they did to their prieſts;) this crown was a circle of gold, the moſt precious metal; from which aroſe, quite round the circumference, plates of gold, formed like pyramids, imitating rays of light; and in the intervals, between thoſe ſhining rays, ſpaces of the ſame pyramidal form, but pointed inwards, to repreſent, as our Author ſays, the irradation or flux of the light outwards from the ſun, and

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the preſſure or return of the air or ſpirit inwards, by which he inſiſts this machine is ſupported.

And in a great many more of their ornaments and emblems he finds evident traces of what their ſervice and religion pointed at, to wit, a recognition of the powers in the heavens, as that from whence all their bleſſings flowed, and on which all their dependence was ſettled.

As this miſtaking, which, in effect, is denying the true God, was evidently the crime of thoſe heathens, who were contemporary with the *Iſraelitiſh* ſtate; ſo, our Author thinks, it was the offence of the antediluvian world, for which men merited to be cut off, all but one family. His reaſons for ſo thinking are numerous, but what to me appears the ſtrongeſt, is drawn from the puniſhment, which was, as our Author inſiſts, the controuling the ſettled operations of the powers that were ſuppoſed to be independent and omnipotent; the deſtroying the earth, and with it rebellious man, the reforming the earth after that diſſolution, and preſerving thoſe perſons, by whom it was to be repeopled, from the general ruin, to be witneſſes for God of the power by him exerted,

erted, and to inſtruct their poſterity in the ſervice of that Being, by whom they were preſerved.

OUR Author talks of deſtroying the earth, which, he ſays, is in formal words affirmed by *Moſes*; he ſpeaks of forcing up the waters of the abyſs through apertures, which, he ſays, were left for a communication with the waters above; diſſolving the ſhell, reforming it with new apertures and fiſſures, and ſending back thoſe waters again through cracks and fiſſures in the ſhell of ſtone, that environed the abyſs, to their former reſidence; he ſpeaks alſo of great quantities of terreſtrial matter carried down through thoſe fiſſures and openings along with the waters into the abyſs; that matter formed at the centre of the hollow ſphere into a ſolid orb, like to a kernel floating in the waters, and very many effects in the motion of the waters, and of this earth, to be accounted for by that collection of waters, and this floating orb; all which, he aſſerts, are to be gathered from what the Scripture reveals, and will account mechanically for the many various appearances, which hitherto have been only gueſſed at, from

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ſchemes founded on falſe and impoſſible principles.

As an inſtance of the perfection of the natural knowledge that is to be met with in the Scriptures, and of the abſurdity of thoſe who charge the writers of them with ignorance; he avers, that the loadſtone and its effects are frequently, at leaſt ſix times, directly ſpoken of; that the reaſon and cauſe of the myſterious phænomena of magnetiſm are clearly to be gathered from the revealed philoſophy.

And, however Freethinkers may make the ſtory of the flood an objection to the veracity of the Scriptures, and may laugh at the account, which our Author gives of it from the ſacred writers; he affirms, that, as he has had the curioſity to make collections of moſt of the different ſorts of things, and each of the ſame ſort differently formed, under ground, and numerous obſervations on the ſituation of things in the bowels of the earth; he can, by evidence to the eye, convince any rational man, that the account he gives of the deſtruction at the flood, and reformation of the earth, from the Scriptures, is graphically true.

NOAH and his family, who had remained in dutiful allegiance to the inviſible God, were, doubtleſs, by this powerful piece of vengeance over the rebellious world, convinced of the ſupremacy of the Deity over his rival the heavens, whoſe power they had ſeen ſuſpended and baffled; and their poſterity continued dutiful 'till the time of building the tower of *Babel*, when nature and imagination began to work again.

ALL tranſlations have made a very odd ſpot of work of this piece of hiſtory. They have ſuppoſed it ſays that, before this accident, all men ſpoke the ſame language; that, afraid of another deluge, they ſet about building a tower, whoſe top ſhould reach to the heavens; that they did this to get them a name; and that God became ſo jealous of this attempt, that it was worth his while to work a very extraordinary miracle, to confound their language, ſo as one could not underſtand what the other ſaid; and to diſperſe them over the face of the earth; and from this notable event the birth of many languages, and the firſt peopling of many nations, is ſought.

OUR Author, who inſiſts that a perfect knowledge of the *Hebrew* language will deliver

liver the Scripture from many abſurdities, with which it is by the tranſlations ſaddled, ſays;

In the *firſt* place, the text does not bear that all the earth was of one language, or that their language was confounded. It ſays indeed, that all the earth was of one [שפה *Shaphah*] lip; and afterwards that God ſaid he would confound their lip.

Now our Author obſerves, what, upon comparing all the texts, holds very truly, that the *Hebrews* had two words of nearly the ſame ſignification, to thoſe that did not advert to the diſtinction; לשן *Leſhun*, which ſignifies tongue, and *Shaphah*, which ſignifies lip; but which, in the propriety of their expreſſion, they never confounded; uſing *Leſhun*, perpetually, to ſignify language, and *Shaphah* to ſignify religious ſervice, or confeſſion, and never to ſignify language. All therefore the text ſays is; that, before the building of *Babel*, the whole earth had one and the ſame religious ſervice or confeſſion; and that, upon that attempt, the new confeſſion, which the projectors of this building intended to ſet up, was to be confounded, which begun in the diſperſion of the undertakers.

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In the *next* place, the tranſlators render the text, as if it ſaid, *Let us build us a tower, whoſe top ſhall reach to the Heavens, that we may make us a name, leſt we be diſperſed, &c.* And ſurely, beſides other improprieties in this ſuppoſed deſign, it muſt appear a very ridiculous project to build a tower, that ſhould defend againſt deſtruction by a flood, in ſo very low a ground as the valley of *Shinar*; or from diſperſion, which want of proviſion would force them to. But our Author obſerves, that the *Hebrew* text ſays nothing of reaching to the Heavens: that word is a meer ſupplement from the tranſlators fancy, who were ignorant that the word render'd *Tower* ſignifies *Temple*, and therefore did not perceive the obvious meaning of the whole, which is, that theſe wicked men, who lived in a country where, 'till then, there was no difference of religion, the whole earth being of one confeſſion, apoſtatiſed to the ſervice and worſhip of the Heavens; and encouraged one another to build a city and temple, the top whereof ſhould be ſacred to the Heavens; and that God, to check this early relapſe into the religion of their antediluvian forefathers, thought fit to confound, not their language,

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but their confeſſion, or liturgy, that is, to make them differ about the manner and form of the intended ſervice and worſhip, which had the effect, at that time, of marring their irreligious project; of making them fall out amongſt themſelves, of making them deſiſt from their enterpriſe.

TAKING the thing thus, and ſuppoſing theſe men miſtook the Heavens for a deity, there was ſenſe in their building a temple, and on it an altar to that being that could, according to their ſuppoſition, prevent their deſtruction and diſperſion; and it was well and mercifully done, on the part of God, to make them differ about their intended ſervice, and thereby to fall out amongſt themſelves, and relinquiſh the undertaking. But, tranſlating the text as our expoſitors have done, a moſt abſurd and impracticable attempt is ſuppoſed to call upon the interpoſition of the Deity, in a very unneceſſary miracle, which, at the ſame time, our Author avers, appears not to have been wrought; becauſe the ſame Scriptures ſhew the whole earth was of one language, though not of one lip, or religious confeſſion, for ſeveral ages after.

AS our Author has delivered the Scriptures, by his acquaintance with *Hebrew*, from this noto-

notorious abſurdity, with which the ignorance of the tranſlators had ſtained it; he, on an infinity, almoſt, of other occaſions, interpoſes to ſet their falſe interpretations to rights. According to his conſtruction of the language, it is no where in the text ſaid, that the earth ſtands ſtill, and that the ſun goes round it; but on the contrary it is, on every proper occaſion, inculcated that the ſun ſtands ſtill, fixed, and that the earth runs round.

AFTER the flood God did not put the rainbow firſt in the cloud, as a ſign to man; but he conſtituted or gave (which is the *Hebrew* word) that bow, which naturally was in the cloud, as a memorial of his promiſe not to deſtroy the earth again by water.

AND in multitudes of other caſes our Author brings, as he ſays, from the genuine conſtruction of the text, a very commodious ſenſe, where the tranſlation is, not to ſay worſe, hardly intelligible.

AS our Author's general propoſition, that the mechanical powers in the Heavens was the deity ſet up by the Heathen, againſt the God of Nature and of *Iſrael*, is a key to the underſtanding a vaſt number of expreſſions, expoſtu-

expoſtulations, and claims, uſed throughout by the writers of the Scriptures, which paſſed unheeded, or were thought trivial, and accommodated to the miſtaken notions of ignorant men heretofore; ſo the ſame poſition, as he manages it, is of very great ſervice in ſhewing the propriety and perfect intention and uſe of very many miracles, miraculous appearances, and religious inſtitutions, which no man hitherto has pretended to ſhew the adequate reaſon, uſe, or occaſion for.

If the religion of the rebellious Heathen was to aſcribe all power to the machine of the Heavens, in the conditions of fire, light, and air, or ſpirit, but principally in that of fire, on the acting whereof all the reſt ſeemed to depened; then it was proper for the Deity, when a new revelation and religious œconomy was to be eſtabliſhed in the family of *Abraham*, to paſs between the parts of the creatures, appointed to be divided, in the appearance of fire, light, and ſmoke.

It was proper to ſhew his ſuperiority over the gods of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, by puniſhing them, who worſhipped fire, by fire ſent from Heaven: It was proper, when *Moſes* was to be

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ſent upon his miſſion, to appear to him in the buſh in the form of fire.

IT was proper, when the conteſt was between the prieſts of *Baal* and the prophet *Eliſha*, and when the formal trial was to be, whether *Baal* or *Jehovah* was the true God, by this teſt, whether the offering of the one or of the other ſhould be firſt conſumed by fire ſent from Heaven; it was proper, I ſay, on that caſe, for *Jehovah* to give proof of his power, by ſending down fire, and conſuming the ſacrifice, water, *&c.* And,

NOT to mention a great many other inſtances, when the captains of fifty were ſucceſſively ſent out by the King of *Iſrael*, who then fell in with the worſhip of the Heavens, in defiance of the true God, to bring *Elijah* to him a priſoner; it was proper, to puniſh their preſumption, and to manifeſt the power of *Jehovah* over the Heavens, to conſume thoſe captains by fire ſent from Heaven.

AND, though the many miracles wrought in *Egypt*, and in the wilderneſs, to which, for evidence of the power and ſupremacy of *Jehovah*, there are many references and appeals made by the later writers of the Scriptures, ſeem to our modern wiſemen, who think

think that God might have done the buſineſs a much ſhorter way, very unneceſſary and ſuperfluous, and as ſuch are diſbelieved; yet our Author apprehends they were abſolutely neceſſary to the deſign of *Jehovah*, and of the utmoſt importance to mankind, for ſettling the point in diſpute between the followers of the true and thoſe of the falſe God.

THE intent of theſe various miracles, our Author ſays, was, in the face and ſeeing of the moſt powerful and populous, the moſt learned, the moſt ſuperſtitiouſly addicted nation then in the world to the ſervice of the Heavens, to ſhew the power of *Jehovah* over their pretended gods in all their attributes and powers, and over their prieſts; and, in ſo doing, to convict that people, and all that ſhould hear of thoſe tranſactions, and ſtill remain in the ſame error; and to convince the people, that he was about to ſeparate to himſelf, ſo fully of his authority, that they ſhould never (bearing theſe things in mind) apoſtatiſe.

FOR theſe ends, after the magicians or prieſts of the fictitious gods were foiled, *Jehovah* permitted *Pharaoh* to harden his heart, or to reſiſt; until by repeated miracles he

he had, to the ſight of all men, aſſerted his ſuperiority over his rivals, in controuling all the actions and powers, for which they were falſly thought gods, and making them afflict their votaries. The ſun and light were turned into a palpable darkneſs, for three days. The air was turned peſtilential; the very duſt of the earth was turned noxious; the river, which was emblematically ſacred, in whoſe waters they purified themſelves, and on whoſe banks they worſhipped, was turned into blood; the wind brought locuſts to deſtroy the votaries of the wind. All theſe plagues, and many more, which our Author explains the propriety of at length, in his *Eſſay towards a Natural Hiſtory of the Bible*, were ſo directed as to leave the *Iſraelites* unhurt, witneſſes of the ſuperiority of their God, of the obedience of the Heavens, and of the diſtraction and folly of thoſe who worſhipped them.

HITHERTO miracles have been looked upon, generally, by mankind as ſo many prodigious, unnatural, and therefore wonderful events, ſurpaſſing the power of man to compaſs; brought about by divine power, to vouch the miſſion of the perſon, by whoſe hands they were wrought, and to gain credit to what he ſhould reveal, or deliver. But, if

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our Author is to be followed, they are to be conſidered as tending to an higher purpoſe, and are ſo many manifeſtations of the power of the true God, to gain credit to himſelf, in contradiction to the pretended powers of the heavens, that were ſet up in oppoſition: and are ſo ſorted and choſen, as beſt to prove that there is no inherent eſſential powers in the machine, the Heavens; but that all inherent and eſſential power is in *Jehovah* alone, whoſe ſervants, at his command, could alter or ſuſpend the courſe of nature.

It was, according to our Author, to confirm the children of *Iſrael* in this faith, that the wind (in *Hebrew*, the ſpirit) ſeparated the waters of the Red Sea, and made them, contrary to the ordinary courſe of nature, ſtand on either ſide in heaps: That by *Moſes Jehovah* ſhewed, in miniature, the ſame power that was exerciſed in deſtroying the earth at the flood, by cracking the *ſtrata* of ſtone, and and making a ſpring of water guſh out of a rock, upon the touch of a rod: That the God of the nations, in the appearance of fire, light, and cloud, or ſpirit, which the Author ſays (as ſhall be hereafter explained) was the emblem of the true God, was forced to attend, to lead, and to protect the camp of

Iſrael: That the air was made to rain down food upon the armies of *Jehovah*: And that *Jehovah* was pleaſed miraculouſly, and at an appointed time, to ſhew himſelf in the appearance of fire on *Sinai*, and from thence to deliver the law, and offer a covenant to the *Iſraelites*.

If all theſe things ſhall be underſtood to be done to ſettle the conteſt, and eſtabliſh the authority of *Jehovah* over the Heavens, his rivals at that time, and all other pretended deities that thereafter might, by the madneſs or ignorance of men, be ſet up:

Then the ſcope and intent of the law, given in the ten commandments, will be better underſtood; and the meaning of the religious œconomy, ceremonies, and ſervices, that thereafter were eſtabliſhed, will be more fully comprehended.

The firſt four commands, by the confeſſion of every body, are intended to aſſert and inculcate the ſovereignty of the Deity, and the excluſive title to ſervice, that is in *Jehovah*, the Creator and Preſerver of all things; in contradiction to all other pretended gods, whoſe ſervice is prohibited and guarded againſt in the moſt expreſs manner; prohibitions that do not ſeem neceſſary to be autho-

authoriſed and introduced with ſo much pomp, and by ſo many miracles, if the worſhip of a ſtock or a ſtone, a red heifer or a calf, taken in themſelves, and not conſidered as the repreſentation of that being (the Heavens) in which all material power in this ſyſtem was known to reſide, had been the only thing to be dreaded.

THE other commands are generally called the moral law, and it is commonly thought that they were intended for a ſyſtem of ſocial law, as they ſeem to prohibit treſpaſſes againſt ſociety.

BUT in this our Author differs, and ſays; that when men are ſatisfied, as they may eaſily be from Scripture and from hiſtory, that the worſhippers of the heavens called their gods their fathers and mothers, and worſhipped them as ſuch; that they held it a religious and acceptable ſervice to immolate human ſacrifices, nay to offer their firſt-born to fire; that they held it lawful, nay pleaſing to ſome of their gods, to ſteal and rob for ſacrifice; that proſtitution of their wives and daughters, in honour of their gods, was a flagrant part of their religion, *&c.* the reaſons for giving theſe commands, commonly called moral, will appear to be the ſame, as

for giving the reſt, to wit, to ſettle and eſtabliſh the worſhip of the true, though inviſible God, and to reſtrain from the worſhip of the heavens, and the chief abominations practiſed in that worſhip.

As to the moral or ſocial law, according to our Author, it was not the immediate view or purpoſe of God, in the law given from the mount, to eſtabliſh or explain it. The competition for ſuperiority with the falſe god, the heavens, was the point to be ſettled; and the abominations of the prophane worſhip of that fictitious god were to be prohibited, and eradicated out of the ſervice of the children of *Iſrael*.

The ſocial law required no publication, no authority from *Jehovah* by miracles to confirm it; except in thoſe points in which the abſurd ſervice of the heathens had encroached upon it. It was no queſtion amongſt the heathens, no more than it was amongſt the children of *Abraham*, whether it was unlawful to kill, or to commit adultery, on any other occaſion, except for the honour of their pretended deities in religious ſervice; and therefore, according to our Author, there was no occaſion for ſettling theſe ſocial duties, except-

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ing ſo far as the miſtakes in worſhip made it neceſſary.

As the principal view of the decalogue, and all the pomp and train of miracles, with which it was introduced, was to ſettle the ſuperiority of *Jehovah* over his rivals, the heavens; ſo our Author obſerves, that all the memorials of theſe miracles, the ſervices, feaſts, ſabbaths, rites of ſacrifice, ceremonies, the tabernacle, the temple, their ornaments and furniture, the inſtitution of prieſthood, with the ordinances relating thereto, the prieſts garments, *&c.* were intended to commemorate, to acknowledge, and for ever to keep in view the evidence of the ſuperiority then ſettled; and to explain by emblems, a ſort of language then well underſtood, the nature, reſidence, and manner of acting of God, in oppoſition to that of his rivals; and his merciful diſpoſition and purpoſe towards his creatures; all which the Author has in a great meaſure explained, and applied in a very new and ſurpriſing manner, and promiſes, on a proper occaſion, fully to explain and ſhew the application of the reſt.

THOUGH a ſyſtem of philoſophy, religion, and religious ſervice was thus revealed in writing by the hand of *Moſes* in the wilder-

neſs, as our Author affirms; yet he is far from thinking that the world was left without information, or direction in theſe matters, 'till this time: on the contrary, he aſſerts, that the inſtruction and law, given by *Moſes*, was no more than a republication in writing of that law, originally given to *Adam* before, and upon the fall.

FROM the goodneſs, the wiſdom, and the juſtice of God; from the neceſſities of the new-made creature man, and from the hints, above mentioned, of God's planting a garden in *Eden*, and bringing all living creatures before *Adam*; our Author concludes, that nature, its operations, and dependence on *Jehovah*, was fully explained to the firſt man; and thence his duty, as well as chief good, diſcovered to him, in admiring, adoring, and, with love and gratitude, ſerving the Author of his being.

WHETHER any, and what ſervices, by way of acknowledgment, were at this time required of *Adam*, does not appear; but it does appear that he was prohibited, under the penalty of death, from eating of the fruit of a certain tree in the middle of the garden, which is called *the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil*.

OUR Author ſuppoſes that this tree, ſaid to ſtand in the middle of the garden, was in the plan of that garden intended to repreſent the ſun in the centre of this ſyſtem, which keeps it all a going; and that the prohibition to eat the fruit of it emblematically forewarned *Adam* from truſting to its ſupport in any thing, but what, as a machine without knowledge, it was appointed to do; and he ſuſpects that this very forbidden fruit was the *Malum Perſicum*, famed amongſt the heathens; in *Greece*, afterwards, taken to be the laurel, ſacred to *Apollo* the god of wiſdom, and which was ſuppoſed capable of giving knowledge and wiſdom.

HE obſerves that this command was firſt broken by *Eve*, who had it but at ſecond hand from *Adam*, and who did not know the natures, and ſeveral qualities and capacities of brute creatures, as *Adam* did, at the inſtigation of the devil, by a ſerpent, who as a bait propoſed improvement in knowledge; a very laudable motive, had not the method of gaining it been prohibited.

HE imagines that *Adam* was not deceived as *Eve* was; but that, ſeeing her loſt, his paſſion for her made him deſperately reſolve to ſhare the ſame fortune with her, and to be

joined with her in the crime, and the puniſhment; and that this was the reaſon why, when their eyes were opened, they not only became aſhamed of their crime, but at the ſight of thoſe parts, which raiſed in each mutual deſires; the violence of which induced woman to ſeduce man into a participation of her guilt, and induced man to yield to ruin and death, rather than be divided from her.

THOSE, who are delighted with ſearching into the origin and uſage of words, will not be diſagreeably entertained by a reflection or two our Author makes, on this occaſion. He ſays that עון *aven*, which properly ſignifies the act of cohabitation with woman, is in the *Hebrew* language made the root for iniquity or wickedneſs. And that פתה *Petah*, which principally ſignifies that part of the body that *Eve* is ſuppoſed to have hid, in the ſame language is made expreſſive of ſeducing, overperſuading, deceiving.

AND our Author thinks that, to keep up the memory of this crime, and of the principal motive that induced man to fall into it, as alſo to be a caveat againſt being carried too far by that motive, on future occaſions, circumciſion was inſtituted; which took place amongſt the nations before *Abraham*'s days, and

and was revived only in his family; and re-enacted in the law of *Moſes*, as ſeveral other antient inſtitutions were.

OUR Author inſiſts, that man could not have ſuſtained his life any conſiderable time after the fall, though God had not been pleaſed by any act to inflict death upon him. The conſciouſneſs of the diſpleaſure of God, the remembrance of felicity loſt, and the apprehenſions of the juſt vengeance of the offended Deity, muſt have produced ſtrange diſtractions in the mind of unhappy *Adam*: That he lived then, is a demonſtration that he received ſome comfort, ſome hint of the poſſibility of a reconciliation; and that he actually had promiſes that comforted him, the Scriptures in formal words reveal. *The ſeed of the woman ſhall bruiſe the head of the ſerpent.*

THOUGH the account of this promiſe, and thoſe hopes of peace, is very ſhort, yet our Author thinks that, at this time, a proper and intelligible account was given to man of the manner and means of his reconciliation, and reſtitution to the protection of God; and that rites, obſervances, and ſervices were inſtituted, to keep in mind, and acknowledge the ſovereignty of the Creator; the

the crime of man, and his forfeiture; and the promiſe and means of peace and ſalvation.

THE foundations of his opinion, beſides what is already ſaid, are in general: That from the Scripture it appears, before the publication of the law in *Sinai*, believers and unbelievers were in the practice and poſſeſſion of many, or moſt of thoſe rites and inſtitutions, which muſt have depended on ſome antecedent authority, that was common to all. And by the univerſal conſent of all prophane authors it appears, that, after the æra of *Moſes*, the ſame inſtitutions and obſervances had taken place over all the known world; though no body ſuppoſes they owed their origin to the laws of a nation, that the reſt of the world held in diſlike and contempt.

TO inſtance in a few: Offering ſacrifice, and that by fire, was in uſe before the written law; *Abel* offered; *Noah* ſacrificed; *Abraham* and his contemporaries did ſo; *Job* practiſed it; it was uſed by *Balaam*; it was practiſed for thankſgiving; for atonement; for binding covenants: at the ſame time it is obvious, that naturally it had no tendency to either of thoſe ends; and, as it was univerſal,

ſal, muſt needs owe its beginning to an inſtitution, that was authoritative over all.

THAT ſacrifice was held propitiatory among the heathens cannot be denied by any, that is converſant in their writings; their hiſtories, their poems are full of it; and, if there could remain any doubt, *Balaam*'s repeated attempts to placate the deity, and the over-warm zeal of thoſe, who gave the fruit of their body for the ſin of their ſoul, who ſacrificed their firſt-born to *Moloch*, to atone for themſelves, their family, and people, and to procure his favour and protection, are abſolute proofs.

OUR Author, on this ſubject, takes notice, that God is ſaid to have clothed our firſt parents with the ſkins of beaſts, that part of the offering, that by the written law appears to have fallen to the prieſt's ſhare; and thence concludes that the beaſts, from which thoſe ſkins were taken, had been ſacrificed.

ANOTHER inſtance is in firſt-fruits, which appear amongſt all the heathens to have been offered as an acknowledgment to their ſeveral deities. This practice is as old as the days of *Cain* and *Abel*, who cannot be ſuppoſed to have begun it without inſtitution for their authority.

A THIRD inſtance is in the inſtitution of prieſthood, or giving to the firſt-born, or eldeſt of the family, a right to approach the altar, and to offer ſacrifice, which in the *Jewiſh* diſpenſation was changed from the firſt-born to the family of *Levi*. If the prieſt was, in one conſideration, a repreſentation of the ſame perſon, that the ſacrifice repreſented in another, it is reaſonable to conclude, that the inſtitution of prieſthood, and of ſacrifice, bore the ſame date.

FROM the expreſſion, *Gen.* iv. 3. our Author collects, that there were appointed times, perhaps new moons, and ſettled feaſts, from the beginning, for ſacrifice, ſervice, and acknowledgment.

AND from *Moſes*'s account of the creation, and what followed it, nothing is more clear than that the reſt of the ſabbath was from the beginning appointed, for preſerving a perpetual memorial of the creation, completed by *Jehovah*; and for yielding to man a fit opportunity, free from labour, toil, and care, to contemplate the high and beneficent attributes of God in his works; and to diſpoſe the mind to acknowledgment, duty, love, praiſe, and adoration, the only tribute that is truly ſuited to the nature of that perfect

fect being; and the only exerciſe that ſeems proper for qualifying man to deſire, and to enjoy a nearer union with his God.

As our Author finds, in the written law, ſeveral particular ſorts of wood, diſtinguiſhed by their uſes in the tabernacle; and ſeveral ſorts of boughs and branches of trees, appointed to be carried and uſed in the feaſt of tabernacles; he concludes, that thoſe trees were in the days of *Adam*, ſo to ſpeak, conſecrated as emblems or memorials of particular perſons, actions, or things, that they were to repreſent.

A GARDEN was planted in *Eden*; and I have hinted at the uſe, for which our Author thinks it was dreſſed there. The patriarchs, particularly *Abraham*, ſacrificed under oaks, nay, planted oaks for the end of ſacrifice and religious ſervice under them. The antients planted gardens, groves, *&c.* upon religious accounts, and very likely held particular trees in reſpect, as repreſenting particular powers or actions.

THE oak, which is in *Hebrew* אלה *Elah*, our Author ſays, was appointed the memorial of a covenant confirmed by oath.

THE tree of knowledge of good and evil repreſented the powers in this ſyſtem. The fruit

fruit of the laſt, as our Author ſays, with boughs of the firſt; branches of the palm-tree, and twigs of ſeveral other trees, were to be held in the hands of the children of *Iſrael* at the feaſt of tabernacles, their grand feſtivity for mirth and rejoicing; and he inſiſts, that the carrying thoſe ſeveral boughs and fruits had a religious, emblematical meaning, then very well underſtood; as it was the only way, before writing, of communicating knowledge; and as intelligible, very near, as writing was afterwards. Becauſe theſe emblems were then ſo fully underſtood, the meaning of them is not by *Moſes* explained; but our Author ſeems to think it poſſible ſtill to decypher and explain them; only thus much he apprehends is plain from the reflection made, that, the uſe of thoſe ſeveral ſorts of trees being preſcribed, without any explication of the reaſon or purpoſe, theſe purpoſes muſt have been univerſally known at the time, and the trees themſelves muſt have been conſtituted emblems, as early as the planting the firſt garden.

As hieroglyphicks, or emblems, were the firſt method of conveying and continuing knowledge, which was ſucceeded by the more perfect

perfect invention of writing; and as all religious ſervice was originally performed, in an emblematical way, which carried the mind from the emblem, type, or emblematical or typical act, to the perſon or thing repreſented; our Author thinks, that, after writing was invented, for the more certain preſervation of divine knowledge, the ſervices were ſtill continued, and performed in the old way, and types and emblems were of the ſame uſe and effect as ever; hence ſacrifice, *&c.* were continued: and at the ſame time that God deſcribed the powers of this ſyſtem, as dependent upon himſelf, in writing, he cauſed the ſame ſort of account of them to be repreſented, and hung up hieroglyphically in the tabernacle, and afterwards in the temple. The lamp in the temple, the pillars, and their ornaments before the porch, our Author inſiſts, were an hieroglyphical deſcription of the powers of this ſyſtem, of the deities the heathens adored, which *Jehovah* willed to be nailed up in the place of the reſidence of his preſence, to bear in mind their inferiority and dependence on him; and that they were to be conſidered in no other view than as emblems of himſelf, and his ſervants.

As our Author, by this new and very ſurpriſing manner of interpretation, gives light to an infinite number of inſtitutions, prohibitions, declarations, claims, and ſervices; ſo, by accurately examining the force and propriety of the original language, and comparing it with the inſtitutions and ſervices, when rightly underſtood, he thinks he has made a world of very important diſcoveries.

VARIOUS are the gueſſes that have been made by learned men, concerning the ſenſe and meaning of the word יהוה *Jehovah*, the ineffable name of God, as the *Jews* call it: our Author has fixed on that conſtruction, which makes it the eſſence exiſting; that eſſence or ſubſtance, which has being in itſelf neceſſarily, without dependence upon any other, and in diſtinction to all other eſſence or ſubſtance whatever. יה *Jah* ſignifies the eſſence, by eminence; and (if I reach the Author's meaning, which ſeems to be wholly new, and uncommon on this article) by the addition of the other word הוה *Hovah*, ſignifying actual being with powers and faculties, gives an idea of that ſufficient all-perfect being, that has exiſtence it itſelf, or by the neceſſity of its own nature exiſts.

exiſts. Something like to this ingenious moderns have ſtruck out by the light of nature, as they ſay, for the idea of the ſovereign being; and it will be no great reproach to their notion, if it falls in with the ſentiment contained in the name given by God to himſelf in the Scripture; nor a ſlight confirmation of the accuracy and perfection of the Scripture, if, when it is fairly examined, it is found to expreſs ſentiments ſo juſt, ſo lofty, and ſo difficult, if at all poſſible, to be come at by the light of nature only.

אל *EL* is another name, which the Scripture gives to the Deity; it commonly is tranſlated *the ſtrong*, or *powerful*, *fortis*. But our Author inſiſts, that it ſignifies properly the irradiator. An idea borrowed from that irradiation or emiſſion of light and influence from the ſun to move, ſupport, and preſerve in being and action every thing in this material ſyſtem; from whence it is applied to the Deity, to expreſs ſomething of that inconceivable power, influence, and manner of acting, by which the Deity acts uncontroulably, where it is not locally preſent. As the Author from Scripture avers the proper reſidence of God is without this ſyſtem, ſo that, by this name, that irradiation, which,

according to our Author's philoſophy, is in a great meaſure the ſupporter of nature, is attributed to *Jehovah*; and ſuch a power of irradiation in a ſpiritual ſenſe, as we ſee performed by the ſun in a material way, is aſcribed to the inviſible God.

To confirm this ſentiment, and indeed a very conſiderable branch of our Author's ſcheme, he obſerves that the word הללו־יה *Hallelu-jah*, which is the burden of almoſt all the pſalms of praiſe and thankſgiving, the firſt word frequently and the laſt, and which is tranſlated ſometimes, *praiſe ye the Lord*, ſometimes is tranſcribed, without tranſlating, *Hallelu-jah*, ſignifies properly and undoubtedly irradiation to *Jah*, or aſcribe ye irradiation to the eſſence. Now, if the utmoſt honour the believing *Jews* could expreſs for their God, in their moſt devout and thankful praiſes, was to aſcribe irradiation to his eſſence; it, on the one hand, renders our Author's opinion of the ſenſe of *El* very probable; and, on the other hand, very ſtrongly proves, that the Scripture-ideas of the Deity, and of its powers and action, were borrowed from viſible operations of the ſun, the light, and air, and their actions in the heavens in all this material ſyſtem.

THERE is ſtill another name for God, the moſt commonly uſed of any in Scripture, and on the true ſenſe of which our Author builds a great deal; it is אלהים *Elohim*, always tranſlated *Deus*, or God.

ALL the world, *Jews* and *Chriſtians*, agree that this word is plural; ſeldom, not once in five hundred times, to be met with ſingular; almoſt always (a few inſtances excepted) joined with nouns and verbs in the ſingular number.

FROM this word, which the modern *Jews*, and, after them, *Chriſtians* have tranſlated *Deus*, in the ſingular number, when the true God is meant; but *Dii*, in the plural, when it is applied to the gods of the nations; ſeveral learned men have drawn arguments for the Trinity, and have taken it to be a full proof, at leaſt, of the plurality of perſons. But, as theſe men did not aſſert, or undertake to prove, that the Scriptures were wrote with perfect accuracy, and were forced to admit a great many things to be written, that they could not ſtrictly and philoſophically juſtify; and as they pretended to fix no certain origin or ſenſe for the word, from the meaning whereof their argument could be examined or juſtified; theſe opinions made

no great way to induce men to think, that the doctrine of the Trinity was founded in the Old Teſtament.

BUT, as our Author inſiſts, that every word of the ſacred book is written with the utmoſt accuracy, truth, and perfection; if that propoſition is made good, what he ſays for the word *Elohim*, for evidence of the plurality of perſons in the Deity, muſt have great weight.

NOTWITHSTANDING an infinity of gueſſes made by thoſe, who pretended to be learned in the *Hebrew* language, none ever hit on any thing that carried a ſenſe, in the leaſt degree, ſatisfactory. Our Author has fixed on the word אלה *Elah*, an oath or adjuration (ſo tranſlated perpetually by the *Jews*, wherever it occurs in the Scriptures, whether as verb or noun, except where it is intended to ſignify the Deity, and then they take care to hide that meaning) as the root from which it is derived; and affirms, that by the genius of the language אלהים *Elohim* ſignifies, in the plural, *Adjuratores*, perſons bound by oath or covenant; referring this name to that engagement, which the divine perſons are ſuppoſed to have entered into, for the preſervation and ſalvation of

of man, called the covenant; and averring, that it is expreſſive of that relation, in which that oath or covenant put God to man.

He inſiſts, that, as this was the original light, in which, after the fall, God was willing to be known to man, for his comfort, and for encouraging him in his duty, all the apoſtate Heathens, who relinquiſhed the true *Elohim*, and reſorted to their rivals, the heavens, for protection, retained nevertheleſs this comfortable appellation, applied it to the heavens, and, as they ſacrificed with the utmoſt zeal and ſerioufneſs to them, looked upon them as their *Elohim*; all-powerful beings, in covenant with them, for their good here and hereafter, and expected certainly from their hands protection and performance of their ſuppoſed covenants: hence by innumerable places in Scripture it appears, that they looked upon themſelves as bound never to relinquiſh their *Elohim*; and verily believed that their *Elohim*, in their turn, were bound never to deſert them.

It is remarkable, that, of the many names, which the Deity has in Scripture, this is the only one, which concerns the ſalvation of man, that the Heathens carried off with them to apply to their falſe gods; for

whom they coined other additional, or diſtinguiſhing names, without number, according to their different humours, and the different powers and attributes of the heavens, for which they worſhipped them. But ſtill, with all theſe, they mixed the character or appellation of *Elohim*, as what expreſſed their connexion with, and relation to them.

And, if this term ſhall be allowed to mean perſons bound by oath or covenant, then it will fit kings or governors, who were under ſuch ties and engagements to the people; and to them it is ſometimes applied in Scripture.

At whatever time the *Jews* thought fit firſt to tranſlate this word ſingular, it is certain the Heathens retained it in the plural ſenſe; and the *Jews*, when tranſlating that word applied to the Heathen gods, render it plural.

Our Author obſerves, that the word *Elohim* is generally joined with verbs and nouns in the ſingular number; yet ſometimes the words joined with it determine the ſenſe ſo flatly to be plural, that, without impropriety, ſuch as is no where to be met with in the ſacred book, the perſons, or things ſpoken of muſt neceſſarily be plural.

In the conſultation that is repreſented to have been had by the *Elohim*, for the formation of man, in the firſt of *Geneſis*, *The* Elohim *ſaid*, *Let us make man in our image, according to our ſimilitudes.*

And, *Geneſis* iii. 22. after man had eaten of the forbidden fruit, the *Elohim* ſays, *Behold man is become like one of us.* The meaning of the expreſſion, and in what ſenſe man was become like one of the *Elohim*, our Author, on another occaſion, endeavours to explain: but from theſe, and ſuch-like flat declarations of more perſons than one in the *Elohim*, he inſiſts it is beyond doubt, that the word is intentionally uſed plural.

On this ſubject he makes great uſe of the repreſentatives of the *Elohim*, the *Shemim*, the names, the powers in the machine, the heavens, being plural; and thoſe powers being, according to his apprehenſion, juſt three, fire, light, and ſpirit, or air: and, if it is ſuppoſed, that theſe three powers ſupport all the motions and actions, in this machine, and that the machine was given for a repreſentation of the Deity, its nature, manner of exiſtence, powers and actions, by itſelf; it is very difficult to call in doubt our Author's concluſion, that the one ſubſtance of the heavens, acting

in three conditions, or with diſtinct powers, is expreſſive of the one eſſence and perſonality of the *Elohim*.

And, indeed, to do our Author's argument juſtice, ſuppoſing the received opinion of a Trinity in the Deity were to be illuſtrated, or repreſented, by the ſimilitude of any viſible, or conceivable object; it muſt be confeſſed, that the wit of man has not hitherto ſuggeſted any thing ſo fit, to throw light upon that high myſtery, as this ſuppoſed machine; if the Author can make it good, that nature is actually ſupported by the agency of matter in thoſe three conditions of fire, light, and ſpirit, or air. The unity of the machine, the cooperation or joint action of all the three powers; light the iſſue of fire, and yet coëval with it, returning ſpirit or air to maintain the joint action, and by it every thing, is ſo exquiſite a picture of what hitherto has been thought to ſurpaſs all imagination, that, if the Author can maintain that his machine works by theſe powers, very few will doubt of the truth of what it was intended to repreſent.

That the Deity, and the ſeveral perſons in it, are, in numberleſs expreſſions of Scripture, uniformly repreſented by the machine, and by theſe three powers in it, applying the idea

idea of fire to the firſt, the idea of light to the ſecond, and of air or ſpirit to the third, the Author endeavours to prove by a world of quotations.

He does not forget the frequent appearances of the Deity, in the form of fire, often attended with light, and air, or cloud: he takes notice of the many deſcriptions of the firſt perſon as terrible; a jealous God; the avenger of ſin; a flaming, a conſuming, a devouring fire to the workers of iniquity: and has collected a liſt of the various temples, that the Heathens had, to the ſun, to fire, or to the heavens, under that head or attribute.

With reſpect to light, he produces numerous paſſages, where light, repreſented or ſpoken of, ſeems properly applicable to that perſon, who was to be the light of the nations, who was repreſented by irradiation; and, perhaps, praiſed or prayed for in the expreſſion *Hallelujah*; and who declared formally of himſelf, that he was the light.

And, on this ſubject, our Author has one very uncommon reflexion, as almoſt all his are; he ſays the word כהן *Cohen*, tranſlated *Prieſt*, and to which no one has pretended to affix a determin'd meaning, ſignifies properly an interceſſor; and, in evidence of this, he has

has produced ſeveral texts, and particularly two, where the children of *David* are ſaid to be his כהנים *Cohenim*, meaning interceſſors with him, it not being poſſible they could be prieſts, ſince they were not of the tribe of *Levi*.

AFTER eſtabliſhing that the word rendered prieſt ſignifies interceſſor, he proceeds to obſerve, that the high prieſt was only ſuch, and employed in offering ſacrifice, as the repreſentative of him, concerning whom *Jehovah* ſwore, that he was a prieſt, or interceſſor, for ever, after the order of *Melchizedek*.

AND then, to make that type or repreſentation more entire, our Author obſerves that the high prieſt, in office, was to wear garments made by divine direction, emblematical in every particular of his office; but more eſpecially in that they were to be of white, that is linnen, and gold, and purple, and ſcarlet; by that collection of colours expreſſing light, the badge or repreſentation of the ſecond perſon of the Deity.

THIS, as well as the crown that the prieſt wore, expreſſing irradiation, as before mentioned, our Author thinks, was certainly underſtood at the time of the inſtitution, and by believers

believers down till the days of our Saviour; and, had it been generally then underſtood, the nation would not have rejected the light. But, as the *Jewiſh* people univerſally apoſtatiſed, loſt their knowledge with their faith, and had the remains of it almoſt altogether extinguiſhed in the captivity; they had leiſure to frame notions of their Meſſiah, different from what the Scriptures exhibited; and in the conſtructions of the Scriptures, which they did not underſtand, they impoſed on themſelves, and on all that truſted them.

To the light, our Author ſhews, there were ſeveral temples amongſt the Heathens.

TOUCHING the third perſon, our Author produces ſeveral texts, where he is formally ſpoken of, under the deſcription of רוח *Ruach*, *Ventus*, *Flatus*, *Spiritus*, the Spirit of *Jehovah*. And from the Heathens religion and opinions he obſerves, that they imputed all their advices, from their gods, to the ſpirit, to ſome material inſpiration or inflation; all their Sibyls, the prieſteſſes that delivered their oracles, were ſuppoſed, in effect, to be blown up, and inflated by ſome ſpirit or wind. And it may be conſidered, whether it is of any conſequence, and of what, that they delivered their anſwers from tripodes.

BUT

BUT not to purſue, at any greater length, the numerous and the various authorities that our Author brings together to ſupport his argument, it merits reflexion, that, when our Saviour ſpeaks of himſelf, as the light, and when he and his Apoſtles deliver the doctrine of the Trinity in the New Teſtament, they ſpeak of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt, without any apology or explication, as a matter very well known and underſtood by ſuch as underſtood the Scriptures; a thing, which it ſeems altogether impoſſible they could have fallen into, if they had not known that ſuch, as really knew the Scriptures, underſtood them; as our Saviour ſays, on other occaſions, *Matthew* xi. 15. *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

AS our Author has puſh'd his argument for the Trinity very far, from the notion of fire, light, and ſpirit; ſo he lays great weight on another argument, not altogether unlike to that, drawn from the appearance of the Cherubim, ſet up at the expulſion of *Adam* from Paradiſe, and from the deſcription of that repreſentation or appearance, drawn from the firſt and tenth chapters of the prophecies of *Ezekiel*.

FROM

FROM the viſions of *Ezekiel* he collects, that the form of the Cherubim was one figure, with four heads or faces; the face of an ox, the face of a lion, the face of a man, and the face of an eagle.

HAD there been no more joined but the faces of the ox, the lion, and the eagle, as the Author can prove that the ox repreſented fire, the lion light, and the eagle ſpirit, or air, there could be no doubt, he ſays, that this would have been a proper repreſentation of the Trinity in the heavens; and, by conſequence, of the inviſible Trinity by them repreſented.

BUT, as the face of a man was added; joined, as the prophet takes notice, to the face of the lion, the repreſentative of light, the ſecond perſon; our Author inſiſts, that this appearance, exhibited to man for his comfort, juſt when for his ſin he was expell'd Paradiſe, and ſentenc'd to hard labour, repreſented the Trinity, with the man Chriſt Jeſus joined to the ſecond perſon, and was the moſt complete emblematical repreſentation of what our Author ſuppoſes God revealed to *Adam*, when he told him, that *the ſeed of the woman ſhould bruiſe the head of the ſerpent*.

AGAIN,

AGAIN, this repreſentation in the Cherubim was a thing ſo well known and underſtood by the antients, though we have deſcription of it but in *Ezekiel*'s viſion, that, when the Lord commanded it to be made for the *Sanctum Sanctorum*, the workmen made it at once, without wanting a pattern: and our Author lays no ſmall weight on it, that figures of theſe Cherubims (and he ſays he can ſhew why there were two of them) were, beſides the ark of the teſtimony, and the mercy-ſeat, the only furniture of the moſt holy place; into which none but the repreſentative of the great interceſſor durſt ever enter; and that but once a year, clothed with the emblems of his office, and being ſanctified by blood.

As our Author is indefatigably induſtrious in his ſearch after the true meaning of emblems, inſtitutions, and ſervices; he is no leſs ſo, in ſettling the meaning of words, hitherto miſtaken, or unknown. I ſhall give you but one inſtance.

THE word ברית *Berith*, which we always tranſlate *Covenant*, *Fœdus*, occurs in ſeveral texts; and is generally coupled with ſuch words, as cannot ſuffer a man to believe that *Covenant*, *Fœdus*, is its original ſignification.

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THE blood of the covenant; *the meſſenger of the covenant*; *I have given thee for a covenant to the nations*, *&c.* are expreſſions that will hardly go down; and what we tranſlate *making a covenant*, כרת ברית *Karat Berith*, moſt certainly ſignifies *to kill*, or *cut off Berith*; which ſhews to conviction that *Berith* muſt, at leaſt originally, have had another ſenſe than is now in the tranſlation given it.

OUR Author, ſearching to be ſatisfied in this difficulty, finds two texts, where the very ſame letters that compoſe *Berith*, but differently pointed by the *Jews*, are tranſlated *Soap* [*Borith*, as they point it] *Fullonum*; and this word, again, confeſſedly derived from ברר *Barar*, which ſignifies *to cleanſe*, *to purify*.

IF then, ſays our Author, *Berith* is taken from the idea of purifying, it muſt, and may, from the genius of the language, carry the ſenſe of purifier, purification throughout.

AND, if it is ſo underſtood, then all the texts, in which it occurs, will be intelligible, and determined to that important ſenſe, in which they were written.

I HAVE given thee for a purifier to the nations; *the blood of the purifier*; *the meſſenger of the purifier*; will all directly refer to the great ſacrifice, the purification to which our divines,

divines, without obſerving the rules of conſtruction, and by very hardy figures, apply them.

And *Karat Berith* will ſignify, in its proper and primary ſenſe, to cut off a, or the purifier, and not to cut off a covenant.

Our Author affirms, that, in the uſage of the *Hebrew* tongue, nothing is more certain, or frequent, than that the type or emblem gets and bears the name of the thing typified and repreſented, or principally meant: wherefore, if Chriſt was the purifier, the *Berith* promiſed, every creature, whoſe blood was ſhed, as repreſenting him, in ſacrifice, might have had the name of *Berith*. And, when ſuch a creature was killed or cut off, as an emblem, it was true that *Berith* was cut off or killed.

And as man, entering into covenant, that is, accepting of terms offered by God for his purification, in token of his acceptance, was to kill, and ſhed the blood of a type of the great purifier; which blood, though but of the lamb, a type, was deemed holy, and capable of ſanctifying and purifying the altar, the tabernacle, the prieſt, and every thing that it touched: the ſame ſymbolical act was repeated for confirming pactions, covenants, or agreements between men; a typical *Berith* was

was cut off; and over ſacrifice men confirmed covenants, and accepted of the terms propoſed by each other, as they teſtified their engagements to God, and their faith that he was bound to them, by the ſame typical repreſentation.

NOR will this conſtruction appear ſtrange to thoſe, who reflect that, in the *Latin* tongue, *percutere*, *icere*, and *ferire fœdus*, are the terms uſed for making a covenant or alliance; in reſpect to which, etymologiſts ſatisfy themſelves with ſaying, that, ſlaying ſome animal in ſacrifice being a ſolemnity that attended all alliances, at the making whereof, the parties were willing to intimate, by the death of the victim, the puniſhment they thus conſented to be bound to, if they violated the agreement, the words *ferire fœdus* were brought to be expreſſive of the end or purpoſe, for which ſuch animals were ſlain at treaties and alliances; and they ſuppoſe that *fœdus*, may have been the antient *Tuſcan* word for *hœdus*, *a kid*.

BUT, if they will depart from ſuppoſitions, without any proof, and mount a little higher in their antiquity; if they will admit, what our Author thinks he has proved, that all the religious ſervices of the Heathens were taken

from the inſtitutions and appointments in the ſervice of the living God; though by length of time, change of language, and imaginations, when men, having loſt true knowledge, began to imagine, they were miſapplied, and, in part, altered; they will find reaſon to believe that, even amongſt the Heathens, ſacrifice, as the higheſt and moſt important act of their religious worſhip, was adhibited to covenants, as an appeal to their deities; and putting all they expected, from that ſymbol of their religion, on the iſſue of their faithful performance of their engagements.

In the *Hebrew* language, the ſame word אשם *Aſhem* ſignifies *ſin*, and a *ſin-offering*, a kid, lamb, or any thing offered for ſin; and the Heathens made it a name or attribute of one of their *Elohim*.

It does not appear, ſo far as I know, that *fœdus*, in the antient *Tuſcan*, was written for *hœdus*; but it does appear, that the *Latin* has an adjective of the ſame letters, *fœdus, a, um*, which ſignifies *vile*, *unclean*, *abominable*, and *polluted*. Now, if with them, at the firſt formation of their language, an offering for ſin or pollution could be called ſin or pollution, as in *Hebrew* a kid or lamb offered for אשם *Aſhem* is called *Aſhem*; I

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ſee no reaſon to doubt, that every offering for ſin or pollution might be called *fœdus*, or *fœdum*, in the ſenſe of that word adjective; and that therefore *ferire fœdus*, in its proper and primitive ſenſe, was *to kill*, or *ſacrifice a ſin-offering*.

BUT, be this as it will, our Author diſcovers ſeveral temples, amongſt the Heathens, to *Berith*, and to *Baal Berith*, by which he ſays is meant the Lord, the Purifier, the early Heathens having by no means loſt the idea, or the expectation of a purification.

AND he ſays that ſalt, a neceſſary ingredient in all ſacrifice, was adhibited and required in this view only, as an emblem of purification; ſalt being one of the moſt powerful purifiers known; and of approved uſe in purging and purifying moſt ſorts of metals from their earth, and baſe droſs, that cloſely adheres to them.

WHEN Freethinkers object to the evidence, drawn from prophecies and prophetical inſtitutions, for ſupporting the Chriſtian religion, that it is ambiguous and uncertain; the prophecies being dark and obſcure, capable often of a double meaning; and the inſtitutions being figurative and typical, applicable only, *ex poſt facto*, by compariſon of

the figures with the events; and therefore not fit to communicate, with any certainty, to thoſe to whom the revelation was made, the knowledge of the event, which they were to expect, and in which they were to believe: the common anſwer is, that we are not, from our narrow views, and with our dim lights, to examine and to find fault with the diſpoſition of the infinitely-wiſe being, purely, becauſe we cannot aſſign reaſons, that to us ſeem adequate, for the conduct he has been pleaſed to hold; that it has pleaſed God to convey ſuch intimations of the, then future, advent of the Meſſiah to the *Iſraelites*, in the law, and by the prophets, as were, when the event prefigured happened, full and diſtinct proof, that *Jeſus* was the perſon intended, and the ſyſtem of religion, delivered by him, the future law and faith to which all mankind was to be ſubject; and that, theſe things being admitted, it is preſumptuous to enquire why the Deity, in infinite wiſdom, thought fit to convey this knowledge, and theſe intimations, in prophecies and inſtitutions, which, at the beginning, and before the advent of our Saviour, were wrapt up deſignedly in myſtery and figures. And

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ſome people even venture to gueſs at probable cauſes, for the delivering and keeping this knowledge in this manner, 'till after our Saviour's paſſion.

BUT, if our Author's ſcheme for interpreting the Scriptures is true, the whole objection falls at once to the ground; becauſe theſe emblems and figures, as well as many expreſſions called figurative, though dark, obſcure, and uncertain to us (who have loſt the knowledge of the language, as well as of the emblems) yet were not ſo to them, to whom the revelation was made, and who, by thoſe emblems, and by that language, underſtood as clearly what was foretold to happen, at the diſtance of many centuries, and therefore as diſtinctly believed in it, as we, at the diſtance of ſo many ages after the event, upon the relation in a language we underſtand, know and believe that *Jeſus* actually came, and fulfilled the will of God, and the predictions concerning him.

AND, if this be ſo, it will be eaſily underſtood, why the faith of *Abraham* and others, who preceded the days of our Saviour, is ſo highly commended by St. *Paul*.

If the *Iſraelites*, to whom the law was delivered, underſtood the language, the inſtitutions, the emblems, as our Author does, they certainly muſt have known that, in due time, God intended to ſend a Meſſiah to the world, under the ſuffering character that *Jeſus* bore; and they muſt have believed it would be ſo, becauſe of the marks of divinity attending the revelation, which they were eye-witneſſes to. The language, in which we are told of that event, after it happened, is no more preciſe and diſtinct, than that, formerly uſed, was to them; and, if we have not ſeen the miracles with our own eyes, we ſee thoſe prophecies delivered to them, and have authentic records of the completion of them, which does no more than put us on a level with them, in point of evidence, or cauſe of belief.

They, indeed, at the publication of the law could not tell (ſo far as we ſee) how many ages, or years, the event was diſtant; as we, who have come after it, can. But, when the advent became nearer, and when the impreſſion of the firſt revelation became fainter, in the days of *Daniel*, they were brought more upon a level with us, even in that reſpect; and were told, to a day, when

they were to look for the completion of their hopes.

IT is not to be denied that this revelation, however clear in itſelf, became obſcure, before the coming of the Meſſiah: the means, by which this was brought about, our Author has explained: and very noble ends may be aſſigned, for which it may have been permitted to be ſo, by the divine wiſdom and goodneſs; without impeaching the certainty of the proof of the Chriſtian religion from prophecies and prophetick inſtitutions; and without ſuffering the divine goodneſs to lie under the imputation that would attend the ſuppoſition, that the revelation of God was not full, and complete to mankind, and did not inſtruct them ſufficiently for their conduct, their faith, and their comfort.

I HAVE ſelected theſe few hints from amidſt an infinity of other very various obſervations and diſcoveries, which the Author has, without ſeeming very ſolicitous about what is called method or order, brought together. And I have ranged them in ſuch order, as ſeemed to me the moſt proper to let you eaſily into the Author's ſentiments, ſo far as I underſtand them.

IF YOUR LORDSHIP will judge of them fairly, and after due examination, you muſt enquire after them in the original; where you will find many proofs and arguments, that my meaſure of ſearching does not ſufficiently come up to, employed for illuſtrating each particular, beſides what I have curſorily ſtated in theſe pages.

I HAVE loſt my labour, if YOUR LORDSHIP does not think theſe matters highly worth looking into; and, from your learning and candor, I promiſe myſelf that, if you do, thoſe, who are in the ſame low rank of learning with me, will have great obligations to you for letting them know how they are to form their judgment upon matters that ſeem to concern them and mankind ſo much.

IN the treatiſe, laſt publiſhed, *Of power eſſential and mechanical*, our Author, amongſt other very curious and ſurpriſing things, undertakes to confute Sir *I— N—*'s principles of gravity, attraction, infinite vacuity, and projection, which, he ſays, are not only unmechanical, but contradictory to the nature and idea of material ſubſtance, and impoſſible and abſurd. And he pretends to prove, by different editions of Sir *I—*'s works, and from different paſſages in them, that he has

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at different times varied and changed his own opinions; and, in effect, as our Author calls it, given up his own principles, which are untenible. In this laſt treatiſe our Author mixes, with his reflexions againſt Sir *I*— and the late Dr. *C*—, a degree of bitterneſs and ſeverity that muſt be diſagreeable to many, and which nothing can excuſe, but a zeal for the honour of religion, which in him ſeems to be very ſtrong and ſincere.

I am, My Lord,

Your Lordship's

Moſt Obedient,

Humble Servant.

REFLEXIONS

On the SOURCES of

INCREDULITY

With regard to

RELIGION.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Treatiſe was left imperfect by the author, [a late eminent lawyer; who was no leſs conſpicuous for his zeal in the cauſe of Religion, than for his ſincere love of juſtice, and an invariable attachment to the laws of his country, in the ſeveral high ſtations he filled with applauſe. That it is unfiniſhed, was occaſioned by his death, an event univerſally lamented: that it is now publiſhed, is owing to ſome of his friends; who are willing to believe, that even a fragment by ſo maſterly a hand may not be an unacceptable preſent to the publick.

REFLEXIONS

ON

INCREDULITY.

IT is raſh to affirm, that the univerſe, or even the ſolar ſyſtem, was made principally for the ſake of the earth, or of man; becauſe, for ought we know, there may be many more, and more conſiderable uſes for it. It is at the ſame time not certain, at leaſt to me it does not appear to be ſo, that there was any other uſe for creating theſe immenſe heavenly bodies, but to regulate the motion of the earth; to produce the other effects which ſome of them evidently have, and all of them in a greater or ſmaller proportion may have, on the earth; and to raiſe in man

man that idea of the magnificence, power, and ſkill of the Creator, which the contemplation of the immenſity, motion, order, beauty, and utility of theſe bodies muſt produce.

IT is becauſe we know not whether thoſe bodies are inhabited, that we cannot pronounce, that the utility they bring us is, or is not, the only end of creating them. If they are inhabited, the inhabitants muſt be of a texture very different from thoſe of the earth. But we cannot deem it impoſſible, that beings may have been made, fit to reſide, to act, and to think, in the very centre, as well as on the ſurface of the ſun.

BUT, without determining that queſtion, which the ſcantineſs of our lights will not permit us to decide; it is obvious, that, beſides the phyſical influence which theſe bodies may have on the earth, and on us, it muſt have been one, and that no inconſiderable end of the making them, to help man to ſuch an idea as has been mentioned of the Creator.

IT is raſh to ſay, that any one part of the furniture of this earth is uſeleſs; that there is not ſome utility in the various

ſoils and metals; or that the different plants, inſects, reptiles, fiſh, fowls, quadrupeds, are not neceſſary for certain purpoſes, though we have not yet diſcovered them. Who will deny uſefulneſs to poiſonous plants; or dare affirm that moths, rats, toads, vipers, and other vermin, have not been intended for proper and fit uſes? It is bold to aſſert, that the leaſt animalcule diſcovered by the microſcope has not its proper uſe in nature.

IT ſeems unreaſonable to ſay, that God framed all the ornaments of this earth, to ſatisfy himſelf that he could do it; ſince he perfectly knew, that he could do every thing that does not involve contradiction.

BUT, as the whole frame of this earth, ſo far as we know it, and every plant and living creature that are ſupported by it, are, to man, ſtrict and very obvious demonſtrations of the power and wiſdom of the Creator; as the œconomy and diſpoſition of the whole is of his goodneſs; it ſeems reaſonable to conclude, that one, poſſibly the chief end of creating thoſe things, was, to ſhew God to man.

MOST of the productions of the earth are, one way or another, for the uſe of animals.

animals. Many animals are the food of other animals; and, to be ſure, ſo intended by the Maker. Man, as an animal, has his ſhare of the leguminous, as well as of animal food. Every living creature wants nouriſhment, and finds it ready provided; but all have not eyes to ſee the bountiful hand that reaches it. Man has his proviſion in common with the other animals; but then he has eyes that may, and, if he do not ſhut them, muſt ſee the hand from which it comes. On the brute, therefore, who cannot know his benefactor, there is no obligation to duty or gratitude; on man, who may and ought to know, there is and muſt be. Why then may it not be fairly concluded, that one of the chief ends of crowding the earth with ſo many wonders of the vegetable and animal kind, is, to fill the head of man with admiration, and his heart with gratitude?

It is raſh to ſay, that the bee knows, or makes uſe of any geometrical principles in the formation of its hexagonal cells; or that it is from any phyſical knowledge of the properties of flowers, that it is directed to cull the ſweets that yield

yield its honey from ſome, neglecting others. It is raſh to affirm, that the various tribes of ſpiders conſider, and, from reflexion and by mechanical rules, frame thoſe nets of different forms and ſizes, that catch their vagrant prey. It is raſh to ſuppoſe, that the ſwallows, the crows, the magpies, frame their neſts, and make choice of that ſituation, from any antecedent reaſoning what is fitteſt to be done, or from any architectonical notions. It is neither reflexion nor hunger that moves the cat to lie in wait ſo patiently, and ſo attentively, for the mouſe or the rat. Theſe actions they exert, probably, becauſe they are directed by their frame to exert them; and to that diſpoſition we give the name of *Inſtinct*.

IT is falſe to ſay, that men deſire to eat and drink, from knowing that doing ſo is neceſſary to preſerve their lives; or that they have a deſire for the other ſex, from a deſign of propagating the ſpecies. Theſe diſpoſitions flow from their make: they hunger, they thirſt, they luſt, whether they would, or would not. In theſe things, and ſome others, they are moved by their frame as brutes are.

BUT, laying aſide theſe natural, or rather mechanical diſpoſitions, man compared with brutes is much at a loſs, except in ſo far as reaſon and reflexion come to his aſſiſtance. He has no inſtinct to determine him what to eat, what to avoid eating. It is but a ſmall part of the globe, if any, that can afford man fruits or legumens to ſupport him the whole year round. His make is not fit for catching animals to live on, were he naturally carnivorous. No inſtinct, ſuch as appears in other animals, directs him to this or that ſort of habitation; and, were he not directed by experience and reflexion, he muſt quickly periſh.

MAN comes into the world much more helpleſs, and continues ſo much longer, than any other animal we know. Without the care of his parents he muſt be ſoon loſt; and without the inſtruction which their experience enables them to afford his reaſon, he muſt continue miſerable, until his own experience and obſervation yield matter for his reaſon to work on. He therefore was evidently ſo framed, as to be obliged to follow reaſon for his guide; whereas all the other animals had

their

their guide in their texture and conſtitution.

No animal but man wants clothing, other than nature has provided for it. Man can hardly live in any part of the globe, unleſs he find clothing for himſelf.

No animal but man ſtands in need of cookery, or any other preparation for his food, but what it has from nature. Man muſt prepare every thing almoſt, except fruits and legumens, before they are fit for his ſervice. Grain muſt be ground and baked; all ſort of meat muſt be altered in its condition by fire; and I doubt ſalt muſt by induſtry be found or made, before the nouriſhment be proper for man.

No climate yields ſpontaneouſly food ſufficient for man, though all do for the brutes that inhabit them. Man does not cultivate the ground, nor find ſupplies for his wants, from inſtinct, but from obſervation and reaſoning.

Reason in him muſt anſwer the end of inſtinct in brutes. He ſees trees and all vegetables ſpring from ſeeds; if he would have plenty, he muſt plant or ſow. He ſees grains and fruits fall and periſh, unleſs they are gathered and preſerved; and

he ſees the ant induſtriouſly gathering and laying up ſtores. Theſe obſervations muſt lead him to produce and ſave corn, *&c.* Cold makes clothing neceſſary; the ſpider's thread and web furniſh matter for his fancy, and ſpinning and weaving are invented. Floods, and ſtorms, and winter make ſhelter neceſſary. The ſwallow makes uſe of morter, the crow of ſticks, for its neſt: man's invention improves on their inſtinct; at firſt huts riſe, and at laſt palaces.

INSTINCT carries brutes no farther than to what is fit and neceſſary: Reaſon carries man ſo far; but then it, or at leaſt it prompted by vanity, carries him much farther. In place of warm clothing, which nature requires, vanity will have it rich and gaudy. The bluſh of the roſe, the plume of the peacock, and the ſhining wing of the butterfly, muſt be imitated to deck our fine Ladies, and our much finer young Gentlemen. In place of convenient manſions, we muſt have ſumptuous palaces, cruſted with marble, and ſhining with gold. In place of food fitted for our ſtomachs by roaſting and boiling, we run into the moſt ridiculous gratification of extravagant taſte, by unnatural mixtures, that diſtreſs the ſtomach. And, in place of

uſing

uſing wine, and ſtrong drink, our own invention, for neceſſary purpoſes, if any ſuch there are, we make them the inſtruments of debauch, the means of debaſing our underſtanding, and deſtroying our health.

HAPPY brutes! unhappy man! Their inſtinct carries them to what is fit and convenient for them; but it carries them no farther; it leads them to nothing that undoes them. His reaſon ſupplies in him the lack of inſtinct, and leads him to every thing that is neceſſary or convenient; nay, bounds him to that, when duly made uſe of. His reaſon, beſides ſupplying the place of inſtinct, was clearly intended for opening to him a ſcene of very delightful employment; the contemplation of the works of God, the reflexion on his boundleſs might, wiſdom, and goodneſs, and the enjoyment of his favour. But unluckily this laſt has long ceaſed to be any part of his buſineſs. His reaſon is made uſe of indeed, by all means, whether right or wrong, to purchaſe things neceſſary and convenient; but he does not ſtop there. He ſeldom ever makes uſe of it to prevent the abuſe of theſe conveniences; on the contrary, he employs it in contriving means to raiſe and to gratify unnatural appetites, by

which his conſtitution is hurt. And he ſeems to have no other view in the conduct of his life, but to ſatisfy thoſe vitious and deſtructive inclinations, which he himſelf has raiſed, and ſubſtituted in the room of thoſe which reaſon was intended to lead him to.

BRUTES are by nature ſufficiently ſupplied with neceſſaries, and with inſtinct to teach them to make uſe of them; and, if they had eyes to ſee the Author of nature, they ſurely would be thankful. Man is richly ſupplied by nature; and, in place of inſtinct, has reaſon to teach him to apply to his uſe and convenience what nature has produced. He has beſides eyes to ſee the Author of nature, and of his bleſſings, the giver of that reaſon that helps him to turn the product of the earth to his account; and he has in his make a diſpoſition to gratitude, as well as he knows, that acknowledgment, thankfulneſs, and compliance with the will of his maker and benefactor, is his duty. But, alas! how ſeldom does he ſuffer that diſpoſition to be brought by reaſon to act? How little is he employed in thinking on nature, with a view to diſcover and admire its Author? and how ſmall is his concern for the

will,

will, for the honour of that Being, by whoſe power and bounty he ſubſiſts?

BECAUSE he can raiſe plants, and gather fruits and ſeeds; becauſe he can convert theſe ſeeds and fruits into bread and wine; becauſe he can manufacture ſilk, wool, and flax; becauſe he can ſmelt minerals, and produce a ſort of new ſpecies of metals; and becauſe he can, by making uſe of his reaſon, procure a vaſt variety of gratifications to his taſte, and to his vanity; he forgets the Being whoſe gift that reaſon was: he is apt to look upon himſelf as the creator of all thoſe things that afford him ſubſiſtence or gratification, and on them as his creatures: he thinks it lawful to make uſe of his own to any exceſs: and he at laſt drops into an opinion, that true felicity conſiſts in the gratification of all appetites, at any expence, without regard to right or wrong; and that every thing that may ſafely be done to compaſs that gratification, is lawful.

WHEN this comes to be the ſettled diſpoſition of the mind; when the bias of the heart is the gratification of all luſts and appetites; when the gratification of theſe luſts and appetites is directly adverſary to what right reaſon ſays is the will of God, and in-

conſiſtent with what it ſays would have been our chief felicity, even in this life, had we purſued it; no one can wonder, that right reaſon is not conſulted, or its voice liſtened unto; or that the crowd, eſpecially of the giddy and vitious, ſhun all correſpondence with reaſon, all ſort of meditation; and in place thereof, when they are ſatiated with the gratification of groſſer appetitites for the time, and cannot proceed farther in the enjoyment, they take up with play, or other the moſt ſilly, if not offenſive, amuſements, rather than be left alone in the hands of their own conſcience and reflexions.

THUS has reaſon, the higheſt gift that God has been pleaſed to beſtow on men, by the perverſity of fooliſh guilty man, become the inſtrument of his miſery. Reaſon was given him, in place of inſtinct, to direct his choice; which was left free, that he might deſerve, and be rewarded for doing well: Reaſon was given, to guard him againſt the prevalence of luſt and appetites, and to lead him to the chief felicity his nature was capable of: Reaſon was given, to let him ſee the order, the beauty, and the magnificence of the works of God; and thereby to diſcover the excellency, the power, the wiſ-

dom,

dom, and the goodneſs of that ſelf-exiſtent Being: Reaſon was given, to ſhew him his immediate dependence on his Creator for every bleſſing he enjoyed, as well as the capacity of enjoying them; and to fill his ſoul with gratitude for the overflowing bounty of his Maker: And Reaſon was given him, to complete and ſecure his felicity, by a ſettled confidence in the favour and protection of the Almighty, ſo long as he made uſe of it to controul and correct diſorderly appetites; and to anſwer the end of his creation, in admiring, reverencing, and adoring that ſource of perfection, mercy, and goodneſs. But, alas! to what miſerable purpoſes has wretched man employed this mighty boon of heaven! Reaſon, in place of reſtraining, has been made uſe of to encourage luſts and appetites, by inventing incentives to them: In place of leading men to ſee their duty, and the true object of their felicity, it has been employed in contriving means to divert the attentention from looking at either: Nay, in place of diſcovering the boundleſs perfections of God, the abſolute dependence of man, and the neceſſary connexion between right and wrong and rewards and puniſhments, it has been fatally made uſe of to hide the Deity from

from the ſight of men, to erect man into an independent being, to aboliſh all hopes and fears of rewards or puniſhments, and to make felicity conſiſt in what is truly the diſhonour of the human nature.

AMAZING as this phænomenon is, nothing is more certainly true; nor has any effect in nature a more ſhameful, a more pitiful cauſe.

APPETITES were given to man, to prompt him to preſerve himſelf, and to continue the ſpecies. The natural calls to eat, to drink, to propagate the ſpecies, were neceſſary; elſe man, employed in contemplation, would ſoon have ceaſed to be. The acts of eating, drinking, copulating, without the natural ſtimulus, have nothing inviting in them. And it is an inſtance of the benignity of the Creator, that the gratification of thoſe neceſſary appetites is attended with a very ſenſible pleaſure, which rewards the obeying of nature's call; as it is an inſtance of his wiſdom, that, when the ends of theſe natural calls are anſwered, ſatiety enſues, and the objects coveted loſe their charm, and cannot be ſo much as thought of with any reliſh, until nature has farther occaſion for them.

THE

THE deſire of knowledge, the effect of diſcerning and reaſoning, was implanted to prompt man to employ thoſe faculties by which the Deity, and what is owing to him, might be diſcovered. And here again the goodneſs of the Divine Being is manifeſt, in annexing to the gratification of that deſire the calmeſt and moſt laſting ſatisfaction, without that alloy which attends the gratification of their other, carnal, appetites; and with this ſingularity, that the deſire of knowledge is inſatiable, and, like its object, infinite; rewarding nevertheleſs the ſeeker after knowledge with very ſenſible pleaſure in every ſtep of his purſuit.

THE deſire of preſerving life (not to ſpeak of the natural impulſe to avoid ill) is the reſult of the pleaſures and enjoyments of both kinds provided for man in this life.

AND the deſire of approbation is the incentive planted in man by his Maker, to diſpoſe him to do his duty; which is immediately rewarded by the calm ſatisfaction that warms his heart upon having done it. The approbation of the Author and Maker of all things muſt be of infinite conſequence to the creature; and the conſciouſneſs of having

having gained that approbation muſt yield the pureſt joy.

THE other diſpoſitions, or what are called paſſions of the mind, ſuch as anger, fear, love, hatred, *&c.* have been placed in man for noble, and for ſalutary ends; not only as they reſpect man's duty to the Deity, but as they regard ſociety: though thoſe alſo, as man has unhappily contrived the matter, in place of promoting the ends for which they were meant, hurry man on to miſery, and give birth to many diſorders in ſociety.

NOW, thus qualified for happineſs, what has man done to enjoy, or to preſerve it? Why, truly, finding an immediate pleaſure attendant upon the gratification of ſenſual appetites, he is diſpoſed to place his happineſs in them: Finding that pains and induſtry muſt be uſed to ſupply what his appetites crave, he beſtows all his time and action in that purſuit: Finding that, employing his reaſon, he can refine upon the common gratification of thoſe appetites, by inventing new meats, new drinks, new ſauces; by procuring variety of women; by erecting palaces; by picture; by ſculpture; by muſick; and by numberleſs arts, to pleaſe and

and to amuſe; his reaſon is made uſe of to thoſe purpoſes only: And finding that, by the uſe of reaſon, he can not only arrive at thoſe things, but that, though he is far from being the ſtrongeſt of animals, he, by employing it, is more powerful than they are all put together; that he is their lord and maſter, and they ſubſervient to his uſes; that he can blow up rocks, alter the courſe of rivers, lock up the ſea in baſons, join, in a manner, diſtant continents by ſhips; that he can imitate thunder, and lay whole countries waſte; and that thoſe things he can do without any immediate controul or check from the Author of nature; he is apt to think he owes all theſe advantages and prerogatives to himſelf, and to that reaſon which diſtinguiſhes him from the reſt of the viſible creation; and, on that ſuppoſal, to conclude, that no return of duty or gratitude is due to that ſuperior Being, from whom his reaſon and all his real enjoyments flow.

As the firm belief of this concluſion is abſolutely neceſſary towards quieting his mind, in the career of brutal folly in which he is engaged, reaſon, that unfortunate tool, is made uſe of on every occaſion to blind its

its owner. It was given by the Creator to be his guide; and it ought to be ſo: if duly made uſe of and attended to, it would be ſo. But, as man has contrived to manage matters, it is liſtened to only when it ſuggeſts what is fit to ſooth him in his fooliſh ſhameful courſes. On ſuch occaſions it is the ſole and ſovereign rule. But, if it preſumes to check him; if it inſinuates, that he is no more than a poor dependent creature, debtor to the ſupreme Being, and conſequently accountable for every talent, every bleſſing, every enjoyment; that ſuggeſtion is ſtraightway treated as the offspring, not of manly reaſon, but of mean daſtardly fear; a melancholy conceit, nurſed up in ſickly imaginations; which had its origin in certain inventions of cunning lawgivers, who, to keep their people in order, and in obedience to the laws eſtabliſhed by them, publiſhed notions of right and wrong, and of rewards and puniſhments, which, conveyed down by tradition, have gained credit with the weak, to the great diſturbance of their quiet, and paſs for realities with enthuſiaſts. Unhappy man! Fatal effect of prejudice: Reaſon, the ſovereign rule, is to be followed, and allowed that name, or rejected, and called

called the fruit of melancholy or enthuſiaſm, as it does, or does not, conform itſelf to prejudices.

But what is the moſt amazing on this article is, that, in proportion as men are, or imagine they are poſſeſſed of knowledge, and of the art of reaſoning, in an eminent degree, their abuſe of that knowledge, and of the reaſoning faculty, to the prejudice of the end to which it was chiefly meant, is the more conſpicuous. In antient times, which are now called times of ignorance, when men did not pique themſelves on the deep knowledge, and the profound ſkill in reaſoning, which we boaſt of at this time, there was a general diſpoſition to reverence the Creator, and a profeſſed infidel was hardly to be met with. But, in theſe our days of ſuppoſed knowledge, the guiſe is ſadly changed. Except amongſt thoſe called ignorant, not many are to be found that do, or pretend to believe in God.

From the beginning, a rational being, unaided by learning, and the experience of former ages, could eaſily diſcern the hand of an intelligent, wiſe, powerful; and very bountiful Creator, in the whole and in every part of the fabrick of this ſyſtem that

fell

fell under his ken; and could as eaſily diſcover his own obligations to, and his dependence on that Being. And accordingly we ſee, by the earlieſt accounts of time that have come to our hands, all mankind, full of a perſuaſion of their dependence, full of reverence to the Deity, ſoliciting his favour and protection by prayer, by ceremonies, by ſacrifices, ſometimes human, nay of their firſt-born; and imputing all their favourable or croſs incidents, that happened to them, to the good-will or diſpleaſure of the ſovereign Being, whom it was their chief ſtudy to placate.

It is true, that the notions they generally entertained of the Deity were imperfect, as well as their manner of ſerving him corrupted; circumſtances that can eaſily be accounted for from the weakneſs and perverſeneſs of thoſe who took the lead in directing their religious opinions and practices. But ſtill it is undeniably true, that the groſs of mankind were ſerious in their belief of the exiſtence of a Deity, of their dependence on him, and of the occaſion they had for his protection and favour.

To

To this general diſpoſition of mankind it was in part owing, that the goſpel, upon its firſt publication, made ſo rapid and ſo ſurpriſing progreſs. No man at that time doubted of the exiſtence of a Deity, or of man's dependence on him. It was eaſy to ſatisfy every one who admitted theſe propoſitions, that mankind, by the corruption into which they had fallen, ſtood mightily in need of ſome interceſſor, ſome mean by which they might be ſaved from the weight of their ſins. And it is no marvel, that evidence given to men ſo convinced, that ſalvation might be had through JESUS, ſhould be received with gladneſs.

AND accordingly we ſee, that, in a trifle of time, the herd of mankind, in defiance of all diſcouragements, and of the moſt ſevere perſecutions, from power, greedily embraced and profeſſed this faith; and continued ſtedfaſtly in the profeſſion of it, notwithſtanding the monſtrous abſurdities with which the teachers of that faith loaded it, and the more monſtrous and ſhocking lives and manners of the teachers; until of late years, that what ought to have been improved into a bleſſing to mankind,

has unfortunately turned out to their deſtruction.

In the period juſt mentioned, wicked and voluptuous men purſued wicked and voluptuous courſes; and many groſs villanies and abuſes were daily committed by profligate men, which the degenerate condition of mankind produced. But ſtill theſe wickedneſſes were diſguiſed, diſowned, or ſome how ſought to be atoned for. The villain diſſembled at leaſt, and was forced to be ſo mean as to become a hypocrite. No man dreamed of profeſſing openly, that he denied the being of a God, or his dependence on, and being accountable to him. And, if any one was indeed ſo fooliſh, as well as impious, as to entertain ſuch a notion, (which by the by is with me a queſtion), there was no temptation for uttering it; becauſe there was no chance that any one ſhould concur in ſupporting ſuch an opinion.

But of late the caſe is ſurpriſingly, and ſadly altered, by the very mean that ought to have produced the contrary effect; increaſe in knowledge, from the more careful obſervation of nature, and from the peruſal

peruſal of the works of the learned in all ages.

WHATEVER degree of acquiſition of knowledge from experience the longevity of the antediluvians might have rendered practicable for any particular perſon, it is certain, that the ſhort period to which mens lives are now, and have for ſome thouſands of years been limited, does not permit any individual to lay in any conſiderable ſtock of knowledge. And, if he will know much, he muſt profit of others, his contemporaries; or of thoſe that went before him, by tradition, or by writing.

HENCE all arts have been perfected by degrees. The experience of one age adds to that of another. And if the diſcoveries of our forefathers had not been handed down to us by writing or tradition, we ſhould be as rude and unlearned as the moſt barbarous of them were.

AFTER writing became faſhionable among the antients, the experience, the reaſoning, and diſcoveries of one age, were tranſmitted to, and improved on by the next. The inquiſitive became diligent in peruſing the diſcoveries of former

times: philoſophy became mightily in vogue; and it was no uncommon thing for men of parts, to dedicate their whole time to the contemplation of nature, and to place their whole felicity in employing all their mental faculties in the inveſtigation of truth.

As purſuits of this kind are of all others the moſt noble, and the moſt ſuited to a rational being, they ſoon became the moſt honourable. Philoſophers were held to be *wiſe men*, and were called ſo *tout court*; as undoubtedly they held themſelves to be, though modeſtly they contented themſelves with the appellation of *lovers of wiſdom* only; and the vanity they had in being very much more knowing than other people, and in being thought by others *wiſe*, was the chief reward they had for their labour, and contributed not a little to run them into the vain opinion, that they were in very deed *wiſe*, and that their ſkill and wiſdom could anſwer all purpoſes.

In all arts and ſciences, ſo far as the obſervations they were poſſeſſed of afforded materials, they reaſoned accurately. In morality, and the whole ſyſtem of duties

ties which men owe reciprocally to each other, and which members owe to the ſociety whereof they are part, they acquitted themſelves well. Brutal appetites and enjoyments they ſaw, and reproached the meanneſs of; the ſuperior happineſs which the right exerciſe of the underſtanding yields, they felt and recommended. Reaſon, in contradiſtinction to appetites and paſſions, was their ſovereign guide; and felicity was to be attained by following its dictates. Social and publick virtues had, according to their notions, charms ſufficient to make the poſſeſſor of them happy, and to ſecure againſt all wants, pains, and diſtreſſes.

BUT, though their ſagacity and attention diſcovered and deſcribed the beauty of virtue, and the deformity of vice; though they defined with preciſion the limits of ſocial and political duty; and though it was the labour of their lives, to recommend what was good, and to diſſuade from what was evil; yet it unluckily ſo happened, that the learning and reaſon which they valued themſelves upon never once led them to the reflexions for which they were principally intended, on the excellencies and mani-

feſt attributes of the Author of the creation, on the neceſſary dependence of man upon his favour, and on the duty thence reſulting to the Deity. Such reflexions would have been fit to humble their vanity, and to have checked them in the courſe of purſuits, which, though not openly vitious, yet had nothing of that reverence and attention that is due to the Deity mixed with them.

So ſoon as theſe wiſe philoſophers had got that quantity of knowledge which in their apprehenſions placed them above other men, and had got into a high opinion of their own reaſon; they no longer employed their parts in attending to and inveſtigating the wondrous effects of wiſdom, power, and goodneſs, diſplayed in the fabrick of this univerſe, in order to raiſe high and honourable ideas of the Almighty, and becoming notions of man's meanneſs, ſhortſightedneſs, and dependence; but, rejecting ſuch poor-ſpirited reflexions, they took it in their heads to imagine, that the profuſion of wonders in the works of creation was intended only for an exerciſe to their underſtanding, to diſcover how, by what mechaniſm, and for what ends ſuch things were brought

brought about. They found out they had not power ſufficient to produce them; but on the all-ſufficiency of their reaſon they depended; and therefore to work they went, to diſcover, and to explain nature. Hence ſo many *coſmogonia*'s, ſo many ſyſtems for ſhewing how the various *phænomena* are performed. Some ſet out on *hypotheſes* which time has diſcovered to be abſolutely falſe. Some gave only words, which had no certain meaning, and therefore explained nothing; but which the philoſopher and his followers were perfectly ſatisfied with. And all of them agreed in this, that their reaſon was a match for the undertaking; that is, fit to inveſtigate and deſcribe all the myſteries of nature, and to diſcover and determine all the ways and works of God.

WITH this prepoſſeſſion in behalf of the powers of their reaſon, theſe wiſe Gentlemen undertook to inquire into the nature of God; laying it down as a fixed point, to admit no quality in that Being that their reaſon did not aſſign him; nor to allow any action to him, but what they, making uſe of their reaſon and obſervation, could aſſign the cauſe and end of.

On theſe articles the difference of opinion was great. Some held the world to be eternal; and the infinite variety and contrivance, to be the effect of *Nature*, eternal alſo: and with this ſound, in place of ſenſe, they were ſatisfied. Some held the world to be the work of an intelligent Being: but the number of them was few; and what regard he had to men in the compoſition, they did not ſay. Some held that the Deity directed events in this world, particularly thoſe that regarded nations and ſocieties: others utterly denied Providence; and imagined, that every thing was left to the government of Chance. Few philoſophers allowed of a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments: thoſe that did, thought only of rewarding publick virtues, and puniſhing vices noxious to ſociety. None of them imagined that God ever minded the inward diſpoſition, or heart of man.

As *Epicurus* and his followers obſerved, that no ſignal puniſhment attended vice in this world, they denied Providence; as they could not be ſatisfied that the dead could riſe, they denied a future ſtate; and, as there was no puniſhment that actually attended vitious actions in this world or another, all

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actions with them were indifferent. So that this ſect, which was numerous, diſcarded the Deity, and made brutes of men.

BUT it is impoſſible they could have dropt into ſuch monſtrous abſurdities, if the vain voluptuous courſe, in which they were engaged, had not given a bias to their reaſon; and if they had not made reaſon ſo much the teſt and touchſtone of all things, as to reject every thing which it could frame any objection to, if it could not alſo, by its own light, diſſolve that objection.

HAD they duly attended to the popular opinions which prevailed in their days, that the gods regarded the actions of men; that good actions were pleaſing, and evil diſpleaſing to the Deity; that ſins, unleſs expiated, were to be puniſhed; and that rewards and puniſhments were to be met with in another ſtate: had they with care conſidered the eſſential difference between good and evil actions; the monſtrous abſurdity which attends the ſuppoſal, that wickedneſs can go unpuniſhed, or virtue unrewarded; and the neceſſary conſequence from thence, that there muſt be another time for thoſe rewards and puniſhments, as they do not happen in this life:

life: and had they permitted themſelves to ſee, without prejudice, the numberleſs obligations, unacknowledged and unreturned, under which man lies to his Creator and Preſerver, and the infinite diſproportion there is between our weak ſcanty reaſon and his boundleſs wiſdom; it is impoſſible the ycould have fallen into a ſet of ſuch childiſh opinions as they maintained.

BUT they were too much bewitched with the chimerical notions they had of their own excellency; too fond of the character they had carved out for themſelves, after driving the Deity from their thoughts, of being lords of the creation, the chief of beings, accountable to none, happy in themſelves, intitled to gratify every appetite, and ſubject to no law but that of their own good-will and pleaſure, to ſubmit to the mortification that muſt reſult from the diſcovery of their real ſtate. The miſery into which folly had plunged human nature, muſt be a diſagreeable object of contemplation to a vain man who had got himſelf into poſſeſſion of the ſeat of God. The neceſſity of humiliation, repentance, amendment, interceſſion, and of a total alteration of views and purſuits, was a pill of no eaſy digeſtion. And therefore

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it is no great wonder, that, though, on the firſt publication of the goſpel, the good tidings were greedily received by the unlearned, and conſequently leſs prejudiced, the philoſophers, and their ſcholars, the pretended learned men of the world, reſiſted it with the greateſt warmth and bitterneſs.

It was however lucky, that, though the infidelity of the antient philoſophers was almoſt as ſtrong as that of the modern, it was by much leſs extenſive; and therefore leſs miſchievous. Learning in thoſe days was confined to a few heads; books were ſcarce, and the purchaſe of them coſt a great deal of money: every body did not meddle with philoſophiſing, as they do at preſent; and, of conſequence, knowledge of the philoſophical kind was only to be met with amongſt philoſophers who taught, and ſuch of their hearers as had leiſure, genius, and books, to enable them to proſecute their ſtudies. The herd of the people remained ignorant and undebauched; and the Chriſtian doctrine, which took root amongſt them, when it called in unprejudiced reaſon, and learning, to aſſiſt it, proved at laſt too ſtrong for the few fantaſtick proud philoſophers.

THUS was infidelity, that is, in theory and opinion, baniſhed from the Chriſtian world, till of late, that a falſe opinion has prevailed, that, with the reſtoration of learning, the knowledge of mankind has enlarged itſelf infinitely; that this is the effect of genius and reaſon; and that, making a proper uſe of this reaſon, every thing that is, or appears to be myſterious in nature, may to a certainty, at leaſt to a very high degree of probability, be diſcovered. And this falſe opinion has unfortunately become ſo prevalent and extenſive, that, except amongſt the meaner and the leſs conceited part of mankind, it is not eaſy to meet with any one that is not tainted with it.

THIS miſchief is however by no means to be charged upon learning, but on the weakneſs and prejudices of mankind; who, conceiving too high an opinion of the powers of their own underſtanding, preſume to meaſure every thing, divine as well as human, by it. For, when firſt the ſubverſion of the *Greek* empire drove learned men, with their books, into the Weſt, which fell in with the time of the invention of printing, whereby knowledge was circulated, and could be come at much cheaper,

cheaper, and with leſs labour, than formerly, great numbers of men of genius applied themſelves to ſtudy, and in a trifle of time acquired ſo much knowledge, as diſpoſed them to throw off the yoke, as well as the abſurdities of the church of *Rome*; which would have had a thorough effect, but for the paſſions and intereſts of ſelfiſh princes. But, in this attack on the reigning church, infidelity had no ſort of hand. Learning had warmed the piety, as well as it improved the knowledge of the reformers: a thorough examination of the Scriptures, of hiſtory, and of antiquity, independent of the tradition of the church, ſecured and defined their faith: and piety in thoſe days was the companion of knowledge and learning; as it muſt ever continue to be, where knowledge and learning are lodged in ſober minds.

THE quick and eaſy conveyance of knowledge by the preſs ſoon produced in all ſoils ſwarms of men of real or pretended learning. Curioſity, genius, or the faſhion, (for it was the mode then to ſtudy), filled *Europe* with men of letters. Sciences of all ſorts were purſued by people of all countries, as their taſtes ſeverally led them; all the antient learning was expoſed to view;

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in theology, the progreſs juſt aſcribed was made; the *Roman* law was ſtudied, and taught with great accuracy; the *Greek* and *Roman* oratory and poetry became the ſtandards of performances of that kind; the *Greek*, particularly *Ariſtotle*'s philoſophy, reigned in the ſchools; *Hippocrates*, *Galen*, *Celſus*, *&c.* gave lights to phyſicians which they had not before; and the works of the antient aſtronomers and mathematicians which remain, revived thoſe ſtudies; in which, by the aſſiduous application of ingenious men, very great progreſs has been made.

IT muſt be owned, that, in almoſt every branch of learning, knowledge has been carried to a higher pitch, ſince the revival of learning, than it appears to have been by the antients, from the remains of their works that have come to our hands. But that is not to be aſcribed to the ſuperiority of genius of the moderns; ſince the true cauſe of it can eaſily be aſſigned, *i. e.* That multitudes are at work on the ſame ſubject; and that the preſs affords ſo quick a conveyance of their conceptions and obſervations to each other, that they are thereby vaſtly aided in their lucubrations. Beſides that many accidental diſcoveries, by men not always

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of the brighteſt parts, have given hints, and ſtruck out lights to the ingenious, which have led to conſiderable improvements, and have baniſhed many falſe ſyſtems.

ACCIDENT gave birth to the invention of teleſcopes, and of microſcopes; and yet to the firſt is owing the confirmation of the *Copernican*, and the ruin of the *Ptolomean* ſyſtem; and to the ſecond, the confirmation of Dr. *Hervey*'s diſcovery of the circulation of the blood, as well as the production to view of numberleſs tribes of animals, hitherto hid from mortal ſight. Accident gave birth to the invention of gun-powder, and of the air-pump; and experiments made on theſe have diſcloſed many unknown properties of the air. Experiments, to which men have been led by accidents, have made ſurpriſing diſcoveries in chymy, and many parts of natural philoſophy, to the great improvement of phyſick, and other branches of uſeful knowledge. And the accidental diſcovery of the *Weſt-Indies*, and the intercourſe by trade with it, and with the *Eaſt-Indies*, have brought numbers of particulars to light, to which the antients were utter ſtrangers.

POSSESSED of the learning of the antients, with the vaſt addition of later diſcoveries, it is not to be wondered at, if the moderns exceeded the antients as much in vanity, and the good opinion they entertained of their own capacity, as they did in knowledge. Hence they employed, with great induſtry, their time and their talents in ſearches after the ſecrets of nature, and in diſcovering and aſſigning the phyſical cauſes of the effects that ſhine forth in the univerſe. *Deſcartes*'s new *Coſmogonia* beat *Ariſtotle*'s, and all the other antient ſyſtems, out of the ſchools. The artifice employed by the Creator, in the formation of the univerſe, in the direction, and the preſervation of it, was deſcribed, and laid open to the comprehenſion of the meaneſt capacity; the phyſical cauſes of the ebbing and flowing of the ſea, of magnetiſm, of the formation of metals, and of all the other ſeeming myſteries of nature, were aſſigned; and, to the conviction of the inventers, and of almoſt all *Europe*, for about half a century, nothing was wanted but the application of his principles, to account for every *phænomenon*, how ſurpriſing ſoever, that

that ſhould at any time make its appearance.

WHILST the world was drunk with this conceit, no marvel they ſhould entertain a very high opinion of the ſagacity of man. If his power was not to be compared with that of the Omnipotent, yet his wiſdom and knowledge did not ſeem to fall far ſhort of that of the Omniſcient. A well-inſtructed and well-convinced *Carteſian* would not think himſelf hard put to it by the queſtions about the formation of natural things which the Almighty put to *Job*, to humble his pride, and to convince him, that he was not a competent judge of the ways and views of God. And thence it naturally followed, that they looked down, with ſome contempt, upon ſuch parts of the Scripture as appeared to them unphiloſophical, entertained a poor opinion of the writers of them, and laughed at the ſimplicity of ſerious Chriſtians, who believed ſeveral articles, in matters of religion, which thoſe wiſe men could not account for ſo well, as they could for the formation of the univerſe, and the various *phænomena* of nature.

TO this way of thinking their maſter's firſt principle led them. *Quicquid clarè & diſtinctè*

diſtinctè percipio, eſt verum, was the foundation on which he built, and a good one. He ſurely run no riſk in admitting whatever was founded on it. In all the parts of mathematicks, in which he excelled, the converting the propoſition, and admitting nothing to be true but what one clearly perceives to be ſo, is the rule which has guided ſuch as followed it to that degree of certainty which has diſtinguiſhed thoſe ſciences from all others. The object of them admits of the application of the rule. Lines, angles, numbers, the creatures of man's imagination, defined by him, and receiving their nature from that definition, he may clearly conceive all the properties of; and is in the right to deny to any line, angle, or number, what he does not clearly perceive to belong to it. But, if he carries this rule to other ſciences, where the diſcovery of truth depends upon a different ſpecies of evidence: if he applies it to the works or ways of the Moſt High, which his knowledge does not reach to, as it does to the properties of lines and numbers, beings of his own creation; and of which he cannot poſſibly know any thing but what he gathers from conjecture,

jecture, founded on the appearances in nature, or from what the Deity may have been pleaſed to reveal; monſtrous miſtakes may, and muſt grow. A thouſand improbable, nay almoſt inconceivable things, in natural philoſophy, are true. The teſtimony of the ſenſes confutes all objections from improbability, or inconceivability, if one may uſe the expreſſion; and credible evidence ſhort of that of ſeeing or feeling, from unſuſpected witneſſes, creates that certainty on which men may ſafely depend and act. And, if it has pleaſed the Almighty to diſcover to mankind any thing relating to himſelf or to his ways, it is but of little conſequence, whether that falls in with the philoſophers notions or conceptions; and the only ſenſible queſtion can be, Whether there is ſufficient evidence that in fact ſuch things were revealed?

NOTWITHSTANDING theſe obvious reflexions, Monſ. *Deſcartes* and his followers, and the other ſects of philoſophers who have ſucceeded him, not content with world-making, have proceeded to god-making. They have preſumed to define him, his attributes, and powers; nay, they

have determined what he is and muſt be, and what he is not and cannot be, with ſuch preciſion and certainty, that, if any thing, ſaid to be revealed by himſelf, does not conform directly to the character and qualities they have given this god, they ſtraightway conteſt, and, right or wrong, reject the evidence for ſuch revelation.

DESCARTES's romance kept entire poſſeſſion of men's belief for full fifty years. If ſome croſs experiment ſhocked it in ſome particular, the ſyſtem was pieced up and mended by his followers, and accommodated to the new-diſcovered *phænomena*; till at laſt the tide of contrary obſervations and experiments was too ſtrong to be reſiſted. All the invention of his countrymen the *French* could not prop the theory that experiment demonſtrated to be falſe: and what was worſt of all for *France*, it was cruſhed under the weight of another theory, built on the diſcoveries of Sir *Iſaac Newton*, an *Engliſhman*.

THE ſagacity of Sir *Iſaac* was admired by all, and adored by his countrymen. His genius puſhed him to diſcoveries in the moſt abſtruſe parts of the mathematicks, that have

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cauſed the aſtoniſhment of the learned; and at the ſame time, from accurate obſervations made on nature, he has given hints, which, though by him flung out in the form of queries only, his countrymen have converted into ſo many certain propoſitions; and upon them have founded what they pretend to be a complete theory or ſyſtem, which future experiments and diſcovery muſt try the ſolidity of. But it muſt be owned Sir *Iſaac*'s modeſty was much greater than that of his followers, not only in the title he gave to his notions, but in the reſpect with which, notwithſtanding his vaſt genius and ſuperior knowledge, he treated the Deity and the Scriptures.

IT is truly amazing, that the ſeries of blunders which the moſt exalted geniuſes who applied themſelves to ſyſtem-making have by late diſcoveries been found to have dropt into, one after another, has not cured the philoſophers of our time of the high conceit they have entertained of the compaſs and all-ſufficiency of the human underſtanding, and of the madneſs of the undertaking, to trace, with the organs which we have got, the hidden wonders of the ma-

terial creation; eſpecially ſince the more light we gain into natural things by accidental diſcoveries, the thicker the difficulties pour themſelves on us, and the more inexplicable theſe myſteries appear to be.

ABOUT the beginning of the laſt century, natural philoſophers had nothing to exerciſe their talents on, but ſuch *phænomena* as fell within their ſenſes, unaided by inſtruments, and ſuch obſervations as were without very great care or accuracy made accidentally on ſuch things as gave ſurpriſe on account of their ſingularity. But, ſince that time, the microſcope has unveiled a ſort of new creation, at leaſt a very remarkable part of it, till then unknown; the teleſcope has diſcovered new worlds in the ſkies; and improvements in mathematicks and aſtronomy have ſhewed the ſize and diſtance of thoſe worlds. The inconceivable minuteneſs of the microſcopick animals, of the parts whereof they are compoſed, of their juices and nutriment, and the delicacy of the artifice that has produced and ſupports them, ſtrikes the mind with as ſtrong a ſenſe of the plenitude of ſkill and power of the Creator, as the grandeur and magni-

magnificence of the new diſcoveries in the ſkies does of his immenſity; and both are equally fit to give to man the moſt humbling view of his own knowledge and penetration, as well as of his power, when compared with thoſe of the Almighty.

THE air-pump, experiments made therein, and others to which theſe gave riſe, have diſcovered many properties of the air, heretofore unknown, which ſhew the admirable ſagacity of that Being, by whoſe aſtoniſhing contrivance that fluid is ſo adjuſted and tempered, as in effect to ſupport the animal as well as the vegetable world, and to maintain this part of the creation in the condition in which it is.

CHYMY, purſued with attention, has diſcovered many effects of fire, and of mixtures, and general properties in metals, minerals, and other bodies, that give daily ſurpriſe; Anatomy has to a certain pitch laid open the aſtoniſhing artifice of the Creator, in the texture of the body of man, as well as of other animals; a priſm in Sir *Iſaac Newton*'s hand has diſcloſed many qualities in light, which never had entered into the heart of man to think of; and ſome accidental

riments in Electricity have preſented to the ſenſes appearances which ſhew that there are ſome powers and properties in matter not hitherto dreamed of, and which no theory as yet hatched can account for.

THE natural effect of thoſe diſcoveries upon minds rightly diſpoſed ought to be, to mortify ſelf-conceit, and to exalt our idea of the infinite power and perfection of the Creator; ſince, the greater progreſs we make in diſcovering, the more wonders of contrivance, wiſdom, power, and goodneſs we meet with, which though our reaſon can ſometimes ſee the end of, it is too ſcanty to trace the mechanical cauſe of; and for that muſt reſort to the will and pleaſure of the Deity, unleſs we will be ſo abſurd as to ſay, that nature, without any meaning or contrivance, has beſtowed thoſe properties and powers upon certain parcels of matter.

THAT denſe bodes gravitate in proportion to their maſs, and that projected bodies continue in motion until obſtructed, are appearances ſo common, that no one is ſurpriſed with the obſervation; and the crowd do not trouble their head in inquiring after the cauſes. But it is not ſo with

with the clear-ſighted philoſophers. They muſt puzzle their brains with aſſigning the mechanical cauſes for thoſe effects; and, when they have done their beſt, they muſt confeſs their ignorance, or riſk error, by averring that there is no mechanical cauſe; and that the effect depends on a law of nature, which thoſe who are diſpoſed to be civil to the Deity ſay, flows from the mere will of the Deity.

In the ſame way, every man living is ſenſible of the intimate connexion between the ſoul and the body; he feels the ſenſation raiſed in the one by the action of the other, and knows the ready obedience which ſuch parts of the body as are intended for action yield to the will of the ſoul: but how the one acts upon the other, is not only not known, but, one may venture to ſay, not knowable or conceivable by us, until we acquire ſome degree of knowledge of what we are at preſent mere ſtrangers to, the nature of *Soul*, and the nature of *Body*.

A body fit to reflect light and colours, when placed in light, not only returns the rays of light that fall upon it, to the luminous body that enlightened it, but ſends the

the picture of itſelf quite round the hemiſphere in all directions, and to every point: placing a thouſand, a million of ſuch bodies near one another, each performs the ſame operation; the rays of light and colours come inſtantaneouſly to the ſpectator's eye from each, without being diſturbed or diverted in the paſſage by the numberleſs rays returned, in different and contrary directions, by the other contiguous bodies. That the Being who contrived this mechaniſm, and created the machine, can explain it, and can give us capacity to comprehend it, is not to be doubted: but, until it ſhall be his good pleaſure to do ſo, all we have to do is, to admire his power and ſkill, and thankfully to acknowledge the bleſſing he has beſtowed upon us by this aſtoniſhing machinery.

WHY then, what has man got by the numerous experiments and diſcoveries of later years? Why, ſurely, a more accurate and certain knowledge of many *phænomena* of nature, of many of the works of God, than the antients had, and a more diſtinct view of the ends and uſes of many pieces and parts of the creation than men were formerly poſſeſſed of: diſcove-

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ries fit to raiſe the moſt high and honourable notions of the Creator, and of his goodneſs to his creatures; and to convince man of his ſhort-ſightedneſs, dependence, and duty.

BUT has man made this improvement of thoſe diſcoveries? Nothing leſs! He makes a pompous muſter to his own vain mind of his knowledge; he looks upon it as his property, acquired by his own ingenuity and induſtry; he prides himſelf on his ſagacity, and hopes by its aſſiſtance to be ſtill richer in wiſdom; and he feels ſo much pleaſure in the purſuit of more knowledge, and takes ſo much joy upon every trifling diſcovery which adds to his ſtore, that he cannot think with patience on the evidence which his increaſe in knowledge gives of his real ignorance and weakneſs, nor on the infinite perfection and goodneſs of the Deity, which that knowledge demonſtrates. Such reflexions would ſhock his vanity; would convince him he had paſſed his life unprofitably; and might determine him to quit his beloved courſe of philoſophizing, or other courſes ſtill more fooliſh; or elſe to perſiſt in them, under a load of anxious doubts

doubts which might pall the taſte of his enjoyments.

He muſt be a ſtranger to the exerciſe of the rational faculty, who does not know, that the purſuit of *knowledge* in any ſcience is attended with very ſenſible pleaſure; or who doubts, that a philoſopher, if bleſſed with health, and means, and temperance, may reaſonably propoſe to drive on in the career of life, till nature decay, with as much ſatisfaction as any man who does not confidently look for a happy *hereafter*. And, as this is the caſe, ſuppoſing a philoſopher engaged in this pleaſurable courſe, it is not to be imagined, that he would quit it willingly, or liſten, without ſome reluctance, to doctrines that ſhould make him uneaſy in it. With ſuch prejudice does almoſt every philoſopher of our days attend to what he daily hears preached, and what the voice of all nature proclaims, of the duties which men owe to their Creator, of the regard which he expects from them to his will, and of the certainty of rewards and puniſhments; and is therefore fertile in objections, to prevent his own and other people's believing theſe truths.

AND what puts our age in a much more lamentable caſe than thoſe that were before it is, that, whereas the number of philoſophers formerly was but very ſmall, the number of preten ded philoſophers is now immenſely great; and, whereas books and learning were then in a few hands, at preſent almoſt every body can read. The preſs circulates books very cheap; philoſophers from opinion, and wits for bread, publiſh Atheiſm; and the half-learned and vitious read. With theſe the authority of the learned, as well as the objections againſt doctrines which men's vices may induce them to wiſh not to be true, go far; and thoſe of inferior learning or rank are glad to follow the opinions, as well as the vices, of their betters: ſo that a man that truly fears God, is at this day almoſt as great a curioſity as an Atheiſt was heretofore.

WHAT makes the truth of thoſe reflexions the more ſenſible, is, that, though thoſe philoſophers called *Freethinkers* controvert the duties owing to the Deity, and dream of no puniſhment attendant on the neglect; yet they all pretend to be, and generally are ſenſible of the ſocial duties, and act up to them better than others do who

who in other reſpects think more juſtly than they. And this comes from the moral ſenſe in them; which they rather encourage than ſtifle on that article, from the vanity of having the good opinion and approbation of mankind, which they court; and from this conſideration, that it is no obſtruction to their purſuits. Whereas, brought up with doubts of the very exiſtence of the Deity; ripening into years, under a total neglect of all duties that may be owing to him; immerged in purſuits and courſes, whereof the objects are pretty much incompatible with thoſe duties; and conſcious, that ſuch duties neglected, if there is any real obligation to them, muſt be highly offenſive to the Deity, and attended with certain puniſhment; it is natural for them to wiſh they may have made no miſtake in that article, and that they may not be found debtors to the divine juſtice. And it imports them very much, in reſpect to the future quiet and tranquillity of their lives, if they reſolve to purſue the pleaſures wherein they are engaged, to convince themſelves, if they can, that all apprehenſions of danger from neglect of duties to the Deity are but vain

terrors

terrors, the device of prieſts, or the dreams of melancholy men.

BUT, if there be ſuch a thing as an intelligent Being, that has employed and diſplayed infinite wiſdom, power, and goodneſs, in the creation of this univerſe; that has with ſtupendous artifice ſtored this globe with every thing neceſſary, not only for the ſupport, but for the felicity of man; that on all his works has ſtamped characters of the infinite perfections and overflowing goodneſs of the Author; that has given to man, and to him alone of all the viſible creation, that ſhare of his goodneſs, eyes to be entertained with the magnificence, the beauty, the harmony, and the order of the univerſe; to ſee the perfection of the Creator in his works; and to diſcover the infinite obligations he lies under to, and the dependence he has on the goodneſs of his beneficent Maker; that has ſo moulded his heart and ſpirit, as to make pleaſure attendant on admiration, and love and gratitude the neceſſary companions of the ſenſe of favours received; and that has joined to the idea of ingratitude the ſenſation of horror; and to conſciouſneſs of gratitude, an inward ſatisfaction,

ction, that even adds to the reliſh of the favour received: what could have been the view of the Creator in beſtowing thoſe eyes, and that diſpoſition of heart and ſpirit? Was he, or was he not, to be diſcovered, admired, adored, loved, and reverenced; or was it indifferent to that perfect and beneficent Being, which way his creature employed his eyes, or diſpoſed of his heart? And, on the other hand, how groſs muſt be the folly and guilt of man, who, miſemploying his eyes, and miſapplying his heart, has refuſed to ſee the perfection of God in his works; and, in place of acknowledging with gratitude his obligation and dependence, chuſes to be indebted to nothing but what he calls *Nature* and *Chance*, ſubſtituted by him in the room of God; and beſtows his heart upon vanity, upon the creature in place of the Creator?

If neglects and breaches of the ſocial and moral duties are criminal even in the eyes of Freethinkers, what muſt be the guilt of neglecting the only duty, properly ſpeaking, to God, of denying him the only return which he expects, becauſe it is the only return he has qualified us to make, reverence,

verence, love, and gratitude? Ingratitude to men is marked with the blackeſt ſtain; what muſt then that vice be when it has for its object the ſource of all goodneſs? and what chance is there that it ſhall paſs unpuniſhed? It is aſtoniſhing, that men who juſtly look with ſuch horror and deteſtation on murder and parricide, ſhould think ſo coolly on the abnegation of the Deity; which denying him his tribute of reverence and gratitude is. But the inſtances of puniſhment which the magiſtrate, for the preſervation of the ſociety, inflicts, help to keep up the idea of horror that attends the firſt; and the forbearance of vengeance in the latter is by weak pretenders to reaſon made an argument to conclude, that no offence is given.

It is a ſtrange imagination, to admit, that men are formed with ideas of right and wrong, with a ſenſe of duty and the contrary, and with full phyſical liberty to act as they ſhall beſt like; and yet to maintain, that it is abſolutely indifferent to the Deity, who gave them that rule of conduct, whether they conform to or tranſgreſs it, whether they do right or wrong; and, conſequently, that it is indifferent to them, if

they eſcape puniſhment from their fellow-creatures, whether they have or have not conformed themſelves to the rule of their Creator and Sovereign Lord.

THE excellency of the body, the capacity of the underſtanding, the extent of the knowledge of the moſt perfect of the human ſpecies, cannot poſſibly make any impreſſion on the Deity, other than the general complacency that reſults from the ſurvey of his works, and ſeeing that they are good. What a poor figure muſt the parts, the ſagacity, and the knowledge of the admired Sir *Iſaac Newton* make in the eye of the Omniſcient? And how few *Newtons* can mankind boaſt of? Theſe are therefore not the qualities that claim the Deity's regard. But, if a rational creature, however limited in underſtanding, or imperfect in body, ſhall have his heart and ſpirit right diſpoſed; ſhall ſee, and, in all his thoughts and actions, acknowledge his dependence on the God that made him; ſhall maintain in his heart a grateful ſenſe of the numberleſs obligations he lies under to that bountiful Being, and ſhall be thoroughly diſpoſed to make the *Will* of that Being the rule of his actions, during the whole

whole courſe of his life; regardleſs of the pleaſures and ſenſual enjoyment which following this rule may deprive him of, and of the dangers and inconveniences to which purſuing it may expoſe him; in full confidence, that the ſincerity of his heart will be acceptable to, and rewarded by the Creator, who endued it with ſuch diſpoſitions: we muſt neceſſarily conclude, either that the Omniſcient does not know the diſpoſitions and inward actings of the ſpirits of all his creatures, or that the grateful and dutiful heart of ſuch a creature is pleaſing and agreeable to him.

THUS the objects of the complacence of the Almighty amongſt the children of men may be as numerous as the individuals of the ſpecies. He has given to very few thoſe diſtinguiſhing parts that provoke the eſteem even of their fellow-creatures; but he has given to all hearts ſuſceptible of reverence, gratitude, and love; and they have no more to do, but to employ thoſe diſpoſitions towards the proper object, to entitle themſelves to the continuation of his goodneſs and good-will for them. It is remarkable, that the only thing which God claims of man in ſcripture is the *heart*;

and it is remarkable alſo, that poſſeſſion of the heart of any of our own, or even of the brute ſpecies, is what ſecures our affection in return. Perſuaſion of the friendſhip or love of any of our fellow-creatures determines us to ſentiments of the like kind for them; and we cannot help, when a dog, a cat, or any other familiar creature ſhews marks of any particular reſpect or fondneſs for us, to have pleaſure in that fondneſs, and to cheriſh the creature in return. Now, though to limit the ſovereign and ſelf-exiſtent Mind, by ſuppoſing that it has juſt ſuch qualities and modifications as ours, would be raſh; yet it would be raſh alſo to aſſert, that there are not in it qualities and diſpoſitions ſimilar to ſuch as are praiſe-worthy and commendable in our own. Nay, the contrary muſt be admitted by all who believe the ſcriptures; which aſſure, that God made man after his own image, and in every page declare his diſlike of ſin, and regard for piety.

BUT here lies the misfortune: This claim of the Creator to the hearts of his creatures cannot be complied with; becauſe they have already diſpoſed of their hearts

hearts in another way. Luſts and follies of very different kinds have got poſſeſſion of their ſpirits, and the gratification of thoſe is the object of their purſuit. Multitudes follow the direction of the temperature of their body, and are ſlaves to the appetites that prevail in them; which chain them to the oar they tug at, by the immediate pleaſure they taſte in obeying the call of thoſe appetites; whilſt the very enjoyment of what they are ſo fond of, deſtroys the appetite, pulls on diſeaſes and peeviſhneſs, with early old-age and decay; which muſt be attended with remorſe and horror, if they do not carefully lock out from their thoughts all ideas of futurity, and of what ought to have been the object of their purſuits. To talk to ſuch men of duty, whether in the career of their enjoyments, or when they are no longer capable of enjoying what their ſoul took delight in, is to preach to the deaf, at leaſt to ſuch as will undoubtedly ſtop their ears againſt ſounds that muſt be ſo grating and diſagreeable.

And, on the other hand, great numbers, who, from their conſtitution, education, or other circumſtances, have eſcaped the inchantments of ſenſual pleaſures, and have

reliſhed the delight that attends the exerciſe of their mental faculties, by much the moſt ſubſtantial, manly, and laſting enjoyment of the two, ſee, with regret and contempt, the brutiſh folly in which their fellow-creatures are engaged. They pity and deſpiſe thoſe groveling mean ſouls, who never once taſted the refined ſatisfaction that reſults from employing the rational powers in the acquiſition of knowledge, and the diſcovery of truth. And by how much ſoever the ſoul exceeds in excellency the body, by ſo much they look upon themſelves to be better and happier than their brethren. In this they glory, in this they are really happy. In their own opinion they are wiſe, and they hope they are ſo in the opinion of all others. On the vanity that reſults from ſuch an empty conceit they feed. They are glad to be thought wiſer and better than they truly are. To gain the eſtimation of their acquaintance, they are charlatans in ſcience, and hypocrites in conduct. The natural deſire of approbation, born with them, they have transferred from God to their fellow-creatures. The applauſe of men, deſerved or undeſerved, blows up their pride. On that

that, and on their imagined knowledge, they value themſelves; and can have no idea of any ſtate for which they would exchange their own, except one in which they might be more knowing or more eſteemed.

IN the whole courſe of the lives of ſuch men, the true direction of the *heart* was never once minded. Senſual enjoyment it might not have for its object, but it had the Creator leſs; and knowledge, with the reputation of knowledge, it ardently breathed after and exulted in. To bring ſuch men to a fixed belief, that the boaſted acquiſition of their lives was no more than vanity, and vexation of ſpirit; that death muſt deliver them over to judgment, for the abuſe of thoſe noble talents which their Maker had beſtowed on them; and that there is no way to eſcape puniſhment, but by baniſhing thoſe vanities from their heart, and yielding it entirely to the God that framed it, would be no eaſy ſpot of work: every power of their mind would be employed in defence of the idol they had carved for themſelves. If religion had preſcribed only prayers, penances, building of churches, or any other tranſient act, its language might have been liſtened to:

but, as it will be ſatisfied with nothing leſs than the *heart*, which is already beſtowed, no wonder philoſophers are deaf.

To reſiſt the evidence that pours in upon them, from nature, from revelation, from all quarters, in behalf of religion; and to ſtifle the apprehenſions which it muſt naturally beget, they call in to their aſſiſtance that boaſted Reaſon, which qualifies them to judge of God, and of all his works and ways. Him and them they try by that infallible touchſtone; and, if ought is propoſed to be believed of either, which they cannot diſtinctly comprehend the manner or cauſe of, the propoſition is immediately rejected, as abſurd and impoſſible; or, if any difficulty or objection occur to their imagination which cannot inſtantly be diſſolved, the validity of the objection is ſtraightway allowed, and the propoſition to which it relates is condemned. But this is not all. If the propoſition condemned has revelation for its ſupport, the whole of revelation, together with the evidence for it, are damned by the lump; becauſe that cannot be the declaration of God, but muſt be a palpable forgery, which aſſerts any falſhood, or, what is juſt the ſame, any thing

thing that does not fall in with the notions of the learned and the wiſe.

THUS, becauſe Freethinkers cannot conceive how a ſpirit can exiſt without a body, or how a body diſſolved into duſt, and diſſipated, can be reſuſcitated, they doubt of a future ſtate, and deny the reſurrection; though theſe very wiſe men muſt admit, they have no adequate conception of the ſoul, or of its *manner* of exiſtence or acting, or of the way in which it and the body were brought together.

IN like manner, what is called the *hypoſtatical union* in Chriſt, is rejected, becauſe the *manner* of it cannot be comprehended by men; who muſt admit the union between ſoul and body in man, and muſt at the ſame time confeſs, they neither do, nor can, whilſt they remain in their preſent condition, conceive how the one operates on the other.

THE doctrine of the Trinity ſhares the ſame fate; and with ſome more ſhew of reaſon; as, beſides the difficulty of comprehending the *how* and the *wherefore*, in that doctrine, as commonly expreſſed, there is ſome appearance of contradiction in the terms, which makes it difficult to conceive what

what is meant to be believed. But this appearance of contradiction is owing, not to the revelation from which the knowledge of that hiſtory is derived, but to the vanity and folly of the doctors of the church; who, puffed up, even as the Freethinkers, with too good an opinion of their own parts, would take upon them to define what revelation does not; and to coin terms not made uſe of in Scripture, to expreſs their imperfect conceptions. The words *Trinity*, and *Perſon*, or *Hypoſtaſis*, are terms not to be met with in the ſacred book: and yet to thoſe terms, and the application of them, the revolt againſt the doctrine is chiefly owing.

WHAT the Scripture acquaints us with, is this, and no more: That what it characteriſes the FATHER, the avenger of wrong, and rewarder of right, is GOD; that what it characteriſes the SON, the WORD, the Creator of the world, the Redeemer of mankind, ſent for that purpoſe by the Father, is GOD; that the HOLY SPIRIT, the correſpondent with, and Comforter of the ſpirits of men, is GOD; and that nevertheleſs the DEITY, the SELF-EXISTENT BEING, is but ONE. That theſe matters are ſo, the Scripture expreſsly declares; and the manner

ner in which it expreſſes the laſt propoſition, *Deut.* vi. 4. is worth attending to. Our tranſlators render it, *Hear, O Iſrael, the LORD our GOD is one LORD.* The original ſays *JEHOVAH our Gods is one SELF-EXISTENT BEING*; for ſo the word tranſlated *Lord* ſignifies. Now, what is there in our knowledge, in our conceptions, or in our reaſon, that can qualify us to determine the *modus* of the exiſtence, or of the action of the inviſible Deity? That we have no ſort of idea of the ſubſtance of that ſoul which acts in us, or of the manner of its exiſtence or actions, is an agreed point: what impudence then muſt it be in us, to pretend to determine, from our conceptions, or rather inability to conceive, the condition, or manner of exiſtence and acting of the ſupreme Being, the leaſt of whoſe works are in very deed beyond our comprehenſion?

THE antients, leſs refined than we, diſputed about the figure and form of the Deity; and, knowing none more perfect or noble, as they apprehended, than that of man, beſtowed upon the Deity a human ſhape and figure. The impropriety of this groſs imagination we ſee; as we perceive,

that

that the ideas of extenſion, ſhape, and figure, are not applicable to ſpirit, according to the idea which we have of it. But, though we have not eyes to diſcover the ſubſtance or properties of ſpirit, does it certainly follow, that they have nothing in them analogous to ſhape or figure; no properties by which they can be diſcerned, and diſtinguſhed the one from the other, by God, or even by other ſpiritual beings, to whom he may have given eyes and underſtanding fit to perceive what we cannot? And is it not, on the other hand, clear, that there may be ſomewhat analogous to figure, ſome particular *modus* of exiſtence of the Deity, of which our want of ideas will not permit us to form any notion?

HAD nature produced to our view ſuch living creatures as wild fiction can preſent to our fancy, compoſed of three or more diſtinct bodies, abſolutely ſeparated from each other, without any bodily connexion, but actuated by one and the ſame principle, moving by one will, acting with one conſent, each affected by the accidents that touch either, the one wounded by the blow that wounds the other, and all dying by the killing of one; we ſhould have had no di-

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ſtinct conception of what the Scripture repreſents concerning the Deity. But then, habituated to the ſight of ſuch an extraordinary creation as has been mentioned, the Scripture-doctrine would ceaſe to be ſo ſhocking as it is to our wiſe men: and yet, from their knowledge of the machinery of nature, they will hardly take upon them to ſay, that the Deity could not have created ſuch an animal as has been feigned.

If this reflexion wants any further illuſtration, let the viſion of *Ezekiel*, chap. i. and x. be conſidered: Four living creatures, which he knew to be the *Cherubim*, actuated by one ſpirit, moving with one conſent whitherſoever they would; attended by as many wheels, moving ſpontaneouſly in the ſame manner, becauſe the *ſpirit* of the *living creature* was in them. This plurality and unity, expoſed in viſion to the Prophet's view, muſt have leſſened his difficulty againſt admitting the doctrine which ſo much offends our Freethinkers, becauſe nothing reſembling it has ever offered itſelf to their imagination. It is not neceſſary at preſent to inquire, how far the *Cherubim* was the emblem pitched upon by the Deity to repreſent the divine nature, with man united to what the lion in that hiero-

hieroglyphical figure denoted. It is ſufficient to obſerve, that, if ſuch living creatures had exiſted in nature, and had been ſeen and known, as the Prophet ſaw living and acting in viſion, the myſtery exploded by philoſophers would not have been quite ſo incompatible with common notions as they pretend. And therefore it is abſurd for wiſe men, to declare againſt a matter of fact aſſerted by the higheſt authority, for no other reaſon, forſooth, but that their obſervation or experience has preſented them with nothing that ſhould furniſh an adequate idea of it.

UPON the ſame ſort of principles, our modern reaſoners reject the doctrine of Chriſt's ſatisfaction. They cannot conceive how the puniſhment of one who is innocent, ſhould atone for the guilt of another. This to them appears to be contrary to the eſſential juſtice of the Deity, which ought not to take pleaſure in the ſufferings of the innocent; and productive of no good effect, ſuited to the character which they entertain of that exalted Being.

HERE again the temerity of thoſe preſumptuous men is notorious. That juſtice, according to our notions, will not condemn

one

one for the fault of another, is manifeſt. But, if the innocent ſhould conſent to ſuffer for the guilty, where is the violation of juſtice in permitting it? If the innocent again has ſome great and noble end in view by ſubmitting to that ſuffering, fit to recompenſe a thouſand-fold the grief borne, where is the injuſtice of permitting him to put himſelf in the place of the guilty? If the innocent perſon is all mercy, all bowels, all compaſſion, and can ſuſtain the puniſhment which the broken-hearted repenting criminal cannot; what is ſhocking in the belief, even according to our common notions, that, to comply with the benignity of his nature, he might ſubmit to bear it? It is true we may not ſee ſo clearly why the divine juſtice ſhould be ſatisfied for the offence of one by the ſufferings of another; and that the light of nature would not have led us to diſcover, that we guilty offenders were to be delivered from puniſhment by the ſufferings of another: but is that a reaſon why we ſhould not take God's word for it, if he has been pleaſed to aſſure us that it is ſo? Do we know ſo intimately the nature of his eſſential juſtice, as to be certain that it will not permit him to accept of a vicarious ſatisfaction?

Amongſt

Amongſt men, we know, that debt owing by one may be diſcharged by payment made by another; and are we certain, that, in the court of heaven, one man's obligation to juſtice may not be cancelled upon another's voluntary fulfilling of it? He little thinks on the unmeaſurable difference that is between the narrowneſs of the human underſtanding, and the immenſity of the divine, who dares reſt on ſuch concluſions.

ANOTHER inſtance of men's making their own confined obſervations and conceptions the meaſure and touchſtone of truth, is, the prevailing opinion that diſcards providence, denies a future ſtate, and conſequently renounces the Deity, at leaſt deprives the firſt cauſe of all intelligence.

THIS notable opinion is grafted on obſervation, that the Deity does not interpoſe in any extraordinary manner in the tranſactions of this lower world; that every thing proceeds in it according to the concurrence of natural cauſes; that the ſame events befal the wicked as the virtuous, with the advantage moſt commonly on the ſide of the vitious; that the ſtrongeſt battalions, conducted by the beſt officers, ſucceed in battle; and that vice and villany is triumphant, when con-

conducted by ſkill, without any appearance on the part of God in providence to prevent the effects of the wickedneſs, or to correct the authors of it: and from theſe obſervations the collection is, that all actions are indifferent, and that a future ſtate is a bugbear.

NOW, ſuppoſing theſe obſervations preciſely true, and that there is not the leaſt interpoſition of the Deity in this world, what is the neceſſary conſequence? Whether that all actions are indifferent, in flat contradiction to the cleareſt feeling and perception of the ſoul; or that there muſt be a future ſtate, in which the actors muſt ſeverally be diſtinguiſhed by rewards and puniſhments? If there are ſuch things as right and wrong, if the Deity is intelligent, and if juſtice is an attribute of that Being, the laſt muſt neceſſarily be the true concluſion. But, as the admitting it might be attended with ſome uneaſy apprehenſions, and might require a change of heart and conduct, the moral ſenſe, the moſt intimate conviction, muſt be ſmothered, and intelligence and juſtice denied to the infinitely perfect Being.

BUT, after all, on what is this important propoſition, That the Almighty has abſo-

lutely abandoned all ſublunary things to the direction of chance, founded? Why juſt on this, That none of our wiſe men have ſeen any miracles wrought of late times; and they are not diſpoſed to think it poſſible, that any could have been wrought in the more early; and it is a truth not to be conteſted, that the unjuſt ſucceed in this world, fully as well as the juſt.

BUT, if they were to be aſked, Whether they are certain, that no cauſe has interpoſed in the producing any event but what they have obſerved? and whether they are ſure that there are no ſecret ſprings in providence, unſeen and unthought of by them, to which important events are owing? if they would not be laughed at, they muſt muſt anſwer in the negative; which is enough to deſtroy the certainty of their poſition.

BUT to examine the thing more carefully, they muſt diſtinguiſh between individuals of the human ſpecies, and ſtates and kingdoms; which by us are conſidered in ſome ſort as individuals, and may be ſo by the Ruler of the univerſe. Though men be not puniſhed or rewarded here, they may meet with what they deſerve hereafter. But, if

ſtates

ſtates and kingdoms are not to meet with any correction in this world, they cannot be conſidered as proper objects of it in another.

Now, it is a certain truth, that all ſtates and kingdoms, in proportion as they grow great, wealthy, and powerful, grow wanton, wicked, and oppreſſive. And the hiſtory of all ages gives evidence of the fatal cataſtrophe of all ſuch ſtates and kingdoms, when the cup of their iniquity was full: nor is it poſſible to ſhew, that any one ſtate or kingdom has been overturned that did not deſerve it at the hand of Providence; however little they may have deſerved it at the hand of the tyrant or oppreſſor who brought their calamity upon them. In this argument it is not neceſſary to ſay, that no unjuſt war ever proſpered. Providence may make uſe of the vitious and wicked diſpoſition of any prince, or of the ruler of any ſtate, to execute juſtice upon a power fated to puniſhment. And the only queſtion which the adverſaries to Providence have to anſwer, is, How they can be ſure, that thoſe deſerved judgments were the effect of mere fortuity, without the leaſt intervention on the part of the Lord of the univerſe?

THE courſe of providence with reſpect to individuals of the human ſpecies undergoes a very different conſideration, and ought to be viewed in a light which no Freethinker ever thought of. If by happineſs and proſperity in this world is meant, wealth, and power, and enjoyment of all pleaſures, and ſucceſs in all purſuits; it may be ſafely allowed, that the beſt man is not the happieſt or moſt proſperous: but, if by happineſs and proſperity is meant, the full and quiet enjoyment of all the pleaſures that man, conſidered as a rational being, is capable of; and ſucceſs in all the purſuits in which, as a reaſonable creature, he ought to engage; there is no doubt, that the good man will be found to be the moſt completely happy; and with that good man as little doubt, that the Maker and Sovereign Lord of man has not abandoned the care of him to blind chance.

THE man who, forgetting all regards for the Author of his being and happineſs, centers all his views upon himſelf; who, born with a vigorous body and keen appetites, ſucceeds to, or acquires means to gratify all his brutal deſires, and plunges into the enjoyment of whatever his luſt directs him to, is not, in the eyes even of the moſt free-

freethinking philoſopher, happy. His purſuits, as well as his enjoyments, are mean and beaſtly; ſurfeits and accidental diſeaſes interrupt the courſe of his felicity; age, with its attendant infirmities, diſſolve the charm that bound him; pleaſures of all ſorts loſe their reliſh; and the terrors, which death unavoidably muſt bring, are no way to be evited, but by baniſhing all thoughts of death from the mind. Such a man's poſſeſſions and enjoyments cannot denote him happy; nor would a wiſe man pray for theſe bleſſings as the portion with which he was to be contented, unleſs he might obtain this other boon, that he ſhould never decay nor die.

No philoſopher that breathes the air, is ſo ſilly as to maintain, that the objects of the purſuits of the avaritious, or of the ambitious, whether in the political or martial way, are objects fit for the purſuit of a rational creature; or that ſucceſs in thoſe purſuits is fit to denote ſuch a creature happy. And, if they will take an impartial view of their own boaſted felicity; if they will draw up a fair account of the ſum of their learning and knowledge, and of the happineſs they have taſted in

the acquiſition and enjoyment of thoſe bleſſings; and if they will candidly ſet againſt it the diſcoveries they muſt have made of the ſcantineſs of their knowledge, the weakneſs of their underſtanding, and their neceſſary dependence on ſomewhat not within themſelves for their exiſtence, which they never have thought fit to acknowledge; or, however, adding to thoſe reflexions the certainty of death, and the uncertainty of what may come after: the balance of the account will doubtleſs ſtand on the wrong ſide; and will ſhew, that though they have been more happy, or rather leſs miſerable than the profligate of the higher or lower claſs of mankind, yet neither their purſuits nor acquiſitions can give them any title to conſider themſelves, or to be conſidered by others, as really happy.

Now, on the other hand, let the caſe of that man be conſidered, who, delivered from the ſlavery of thoſe vices and follies, and acquainted with the end for which he was created, endeavours with all his powers to anſwer the deſign. Such a one taſtes the ſame pleaſure in all ſenſual enjoyments as the greateſt epicure; and has as quick a reliſh of all

all mental joys that proceed from the purſuit, or from the diſcovery of truth, as the greateſt philoſopher.

BUT then he ſees, with the philoſopher, that thoſe ſenſual enjoyments are mean and beaſtly, unworthy of the purſuit of rational creatures; that they are annexed to the performance of the animal functions, to induce men to do acts neceſſary for their own preſervation, and the propagation of the ſpecies; but which they never would think of, but for the appetites implanted in them, and the pleaſure which attends the gratification of the appetites; and that ſatiety and uneaſineſs accompanies the purſuit of thoſe pleaſures any farther than nature requires.

AND he ſees, by the exerciſe of his rational powers, what few philoſophers attend to, that the eyes of his mind were given him to diſcover the immenſity, the power, the wiſdom, and the goodneſs of the Creator in his works; to diſcover the overflowing bounty of that perfect Being to him, and his conſtant dependence on the Author and Source of his happineſs; to diſcover the numberleſs obligations he lies under, with reverence and gratitude,

to obey and to adore the Sovereign of the univerſe; to diſcover his duty towards his fellow-creatures, as well as towards his Creator; to diſcover, that the favour of the Almighty muſt attend performance of duty, as his diſpleaſure muſt follow the ungrateful breach of it: to diſcover, that the favour of God is the only object worthy of the purſuit of the heart of man; and to diſcover, that the beſtowing that heart, and all the deſires of it, on ſenſual brutiſh pleaſures, or any other vanity, to the excluſion of the *Eternal*, is the moſt horrid, as well as the moſt fooliſh crime that can be imagined.

THE pleaſures of life are enjoyed by this man with as much, perhaps with more reliſh, than by the libertine. But then they do not pervert the heart. The only motion they are capable of exciting there, is, gratitude and thankfulneſs to the beneficent Donor. The acquiſition of knowledge is taſted by him with as much delight as it is by the philoſopher; though it produces in them very different effects. The one it puffs up with pride and preſumption; the other it fills with humility, and reverence for the Moſt High.

THE

THE man who has fixed his heart upon the proper object, does not ceaſe to taſte with pleaſure the common bleſſings of this life; neither does he fail to beſtow the proper induſtry to acquire, and to preſerve them. But then he conſiders them only as ſo many ſugar-plums given by the Creator to make his confinement to his priſon of clay more palatable; which muſt have an end, when his enlargement begins. He laments the unhappy condition of thoſe who ſeek after them as their chief good. He would neither acquire nor preſerve them at the expence of doing one ſingle act that might forfeit the favour of his Maker and Benefactor: neither does he repine at the privation of them; knowing, that it could not happen without the will and pleaſure of his Lord and Maſter, the Sovereign of the univerſe, to which his heart and will chearfully ſubmit.

COMPARE the happineſs of this man with that of the greateſt favourite of fortune, who has ſet his heart on other objects, and who has had the full gratification of all his appetites, ſo far as the courſe of humanity will permit; but who muſt die, and leave thoſe enjoyments, uncertain

certain what is to happen hereafter. This man enjoys, in common with the wiſe and the voluptuous of his rank in the world, all the ſenſual and mental pleaſures in which they delight, without the alloy that muſt torture their minds, when they think of parting with them. But then he has in himſelf a conſtant ſource of unalloyed joy, to which they are utter ſtrangers. The abundant goodneſs of the giver of all thoſe bleſſings fills his ſoul with gratitude and thankfulneſs, and diſpoſes him with joy to do what appears to him to be his duty; and conſciouſneſs of that happy diſpoſition produces the moſt firm confidence and reliance on the favour and good-will of his omnipotent Benefactor; from which he is to look hereafter for joys of a different nature from thoſe which in this life he ſlights, when they ſtand in the way of his duty. Every act of duty performed fills his ſoul with a placid, ſtill ſatisfaction, that is ſenſibly felt, though not eaſily expreſſed. A mouthful of meat, beſtowed on a hungry beggar, gives the heart of the donor more real ſatisfaction, than the reliſh of the food gives pleaſure to the craving ſtomach, or the moſt delicious dainty

gives

gives to the vitiated palates of the voluptuous. And the particular excellency of theſe enjoyments is, that no exceſs can ſurfeit or pall the appetite, no accident can deprive him of them.

To a man poſſeſſed of ſuch an incorruptible ſtock of happineſs, the pleaſures of this life appear but mere baubles; and the privation of them a trifling loſs. Life itſelf he is diſpoſed to reſign with willingneſs, becauſe to him death has no ſting.

If then felicity, even in this life, does not depend upon what are called the gifts of fortune, but on the diſpoſition of ſoul that has been deſcribed, with what countenance can any Freethinker maintain, that in this world there is no interpoſition of the act of the Deity, no ſpecial providence? It may indeed be true, that wealth, and honours, and power do not attend the moſt deſerving; and that halters, and infamy, and want do not lay hold on the vitious: but will it follow, from our not being able to ſee the hand of Providence in the diſtribution of thoſe periſhing favours on which the real happineſs of man does not depend, that the Framer of the hearts of men has no communication with

them, and never interpoſes to determine them to that wherein their chief felicity conſiſts?

THE proofs of the goodneſs and juſtice of God, of the duty and dependence of man, of the certainty of rewards and puniſhments, of the deſperate condition of thoſe, who, neglecting God and their duty, purſue fading pleaſures and vanity with their whole ſpirit; and of the real and permanent happineſs of ſuch as enjoy all the gifts of God with thankfulneſs, and gratefully make it the buſineſs of their lives to obey his will and to obtain his favour, are ſo conſpicuous, that nothing ſeems to be wanted towards the producing *conviction*, but ſomewhat that ſhall turn their eye, and fix the attention upon them; becauſe, if they are duly conſidered and attended to, the evidence is irreſiſtible. Now, as that attention may be raiſed by various incidents, ſometimes by ſickneſs and diſtreſſes of different kinds, ſometimes by a happy education, ſometimes by the converſation of pious perſons, and ſometimes by reading and meditation, which a thouſand circumſtances ſeemingly accidental concur to improve; why

why ſhould we conclude, that all theſe incidents are purely accidental; and that the perſon transformed, by them, from a miſerable brute to a happy man, owes the change to blind chance? Whatever vain reaſoners may imagine or babble, the perſon whoſe eyes are opened by thoſe incidents, acknowledges with gratitude the hand of God in them.

BUT, though Freethinkers might be excuſed for concluding, however raſhly, that Providence does not interpoſe in the government of the external tranſactions of this world, becauſe, after all the obſervations they can make, they have not complete evidence to the contrary; yet what excuſe can they have for pretending to judge, that the merciful and beneficent Spirit of God does not work upon the ſpirits of men? From their proper experience they can draw no obſervation, as they have locked out all regards for the Deity from their heart; and what paſſes in the ſpirits of other men they can have no knowledge of, nor indeed any idea, as they have ſuffered no ſuch tranſactions to take place in their own.

PHILOSOPHERS have talked much of action and reaction in matter, and imagine they

they underſtand what they ſay; what ſhould hinder them to believe, that there may be ſuch a thing as action and reaction between ſpirits, even between the infinitely perfect Spirit and the ſpirits of finite men? If gratitude obſerved in a dog produces ſome regard and kindneſs in the mind of his maſter, why may not the gratitude, the warmth of the heart of man, work ſome ſimilar effect in the all-ſeeing Mind? and who dare preſume to ſay, that it may not act on, and comfort the ſpirit of man in return? If that beneficent and all-powerful Spirit does not ſhew his kindneſs in beſtowing wealth, and power, and fading pleaſures, it is becauſe they are not real goods; becauſe they are not the object of the heart and wiſhes of the party favoured; and becauſe, in place of doing them real good, they might call off the affections from that exerciſe wherein his true felicity conſiſts. And this is ſo true, that croſſes, diſappointments, and diſtreſſes, may juſtly be conſidered as acts of the greateſt kindneſs, when they tend to recal the ſtraying mind from vanity, and to fix it on its proper object.

How then dares preſumptuous ſhort-ſighted man deny the interpoſition of Providence,

dence, becauſe he does not ſee the ſecret ſpring by which it acts, or know the intentions of the Inſcrutable? Or how can he, becauſe a ſatisfactory reaſon does not appear to him for the long-ſuffering patience and forbearance of the Moſt Merciful, doubt of the exiſtence or juſtice of that Being; deny a future ſtate; or maintain the indifference of all actions, as to right and wrong? But ſuch is the fatal effect of the corruption of man's heart, and of the deflection of it from the true object to vice and vanity.

THE extreme folly of modern Free-thinkers is much leſs accountable or excuſable than that of the antients. The antients had no certain lights but thoſe of nature. Thoſe naturally led them to ſee the vanity of the purſuits wherein they were engaged, the depravity of the human nature, and the conſequences which might attend their courſes hereafter. Thoſe were but melancholy reflexions, leading to deſpair, and tending to ſour every enjoyment; as they had no certain intimation, that any method was chalked out by the Deity for the expiation of ſin, and for reſtoring offending man to his favour and protection. And therefore it is not to be wondered at, that they baniſhed from their

their thoughts ſuch gloomy uncomfortable ſpeculations. But our modern madmen hear every day of mercy and pardon offered by by the offended Deity to offending ſinners, if they will receive it thankfully. They are told, that this is the declared will of God, and that there is complete evidence of its being ſuch; and they ſee, that this is the belief of numbers of the moſt ſagacious and inquiſitive of their fellow-creatures. But all this will not do. Their heart is given to other objects; and they hear, that theſe muſt be diſmiſſed before they can ſhare of the pardon proffered.

To keep however their countenance, and the character of Freethinkers, they muſt aſſign ſome reaſon for their revolting againſt revelation. And this they readily do. They ſay, falſely, that they have carefully examined all the evidence for revelation; and they ſay, honeſtly and truly, that all the evidence which they have conſidered, has not been ſufficient to ſatisfy their objections, and to convince them, that what is called revelation is really ſuch.

THAT they have carefully examined *all* the evidence, is abſolutely falſe. No man ever did, or can do ſo, without receiving

perfect conviction. It is a queſtion, whether any profeſſed Freethinker, who has hitherto appeared, had learning or talents ſufficient to examine the evidence. It is certain, that none who have wrote, have diſcovered that they had either.

MEN may ſearch for arguments *à priori* for the proof of any propoſition that may reſult from the nature of things known to them. That treachery to our neighbour, and ingratitude to the God that made us, are highly offenſive, and ought to be puniſhed by perfect juſtice, may be demonſtrated *à priori*. But, if ſovereign goodneſs and mercy, to deliver repenting men from deſerved puniſhment, has contrived a method of ſalvation by ſending his ſon into the world to ſuffer for them; and if, to prevent their deſpair, and to encourage their repentance and amendment, that beneficent Being has been pleaſed to publiſh his pardon, with the conditions of it, to mankind; this muſt be admitted to be a matter of fact not diſcoverable by any inductions *à priori*; becauſe it is in ſome ſort adverſary to our general notions of right and wrong; and therefore, to have any effect on the minds of men, muſt

have been publiſhed with ſuch a degree of evidence, as muſt neceſſarily gain full belief; and if it was the intention of the Author of this publication, that it ſhould gain belief in future ages, the evidence muſt be of that nature that is fit to carry conviction to all for whom the publication was intended.

ACCORDINGLY this revelation, which was made ſoon after the firſt tranſgreſſion, was renewed from time to time, under circumſtances ſo diſtinguiſhed, as could not poſſibly leave any doubt, that it was the declaration of the Deity. And, by wiſdom and power more than human, ſuch a ſort of evidence has been contrived and preſerved for the authority of that revelation, as far exceeds, in point of certainty, the proof of any other event that ever happened. That ſuch cities as *Babylon* and *Carthage* exiſted; that *Cæſar* won the battle of *Pharſalia*, and was murdered in the *Roman* ſenate, no one doubts. But, if all the documents for the authority of revelation were brought together, the proof in this laſt caſe is by ſo much ſtronger than that in the others, as the belief of it is more intereſting to mankind.

BUT

BUT the different degrees of credit given to the one and to the other, arise from the different dispositions of the hearts of men. There is no prejudice in the mind of man against admitting the first; against the last there is this violent bias, that, if it is admitted, men must become in their own eyes miserable wretches, and must dismiss those lusts and vanities on which they doated. To prevent this disgrace and irreparable damage, arms must be taken up against the evidence that insults their quiet; any objection, (of which there are, and must be multitudes), if it cannot easily be answered, is a demonstration superior to all the evidence for revelation; and they look into revelation, and to the evidence for it, only to arm themselves with such objections.

IT is indeed no wonder, that men whose prejudices stand so much in the way of believing, do not give themselves the trouble to search after, and to collect *all* the proofs for revelation. It is a laborious work. All the remains of antient history, and the compositures of the learned of those times, must be examined; all the rites, opinions, and practices of nations, so far as they can be discovered, must

be conſidered; all the monuments of antiquity, now extant, muſt be ſurveyed; a reaſonable knowledge of the languages in which revelation is recorded, muſt be attained; and the conſequences that have attended that revelation ſince the advent of Chriſt, muſt be adverted to, before one can ſay that he is poſſeſſed of all the evidence, and before he can form a judgment of many of the objections which Freethinkers move. But, that none of them who have wrote have given themſelves this trouble, is plain from their writings; which contain little more than ſmatterings of learning, to which the *Jews* have helped them, and which they ſeem, without due examination, to have taken on truſt.

THOUGH it has pleaſed the merciful wiſdom of God, to ſcatter proofs of his revelation over all the antient nations, and to preſerve documents of them down to our days, for the conviction of obſtinate infidels, and for the confirmation of the faith of the inquiſitive who believe; yet, happily for the bulk of mankind, who have neither time nor talents for ſuch inquiries, revelation is ſo calculated, as to require nothing of man that his conſcious ſoul does not ſee to be his duty; and to promiſe

promiſe him nothing that does not appear to his moſt inward ſenſe to be the neceſſary conſequence of doing it. By it he is acquainted with his forlorn condition; which he needs do no more to diſcover to be truth, than to turn his eyes inward upon himſelf. And a remedy is pointed out adequate to the diſeaſe; which tends to magnify the mercy, the wiſdom, and the goodneſs of the Creator; and to tie the creature to him, by ſtill ſtronger bonds of duty and gratitude.

In this ſyſtem there is ſuch harmony between duty and intereſt, and therefore ſuch a propenſity in every ſober-thinking perſon to wiſh it to be true, that, from the declared opinions of others, better qualified to judge of the evidence, and to determine, it gains belief; and that very belief, influencing the practice, brings real tranquillity and happineſs in this life, ſpringing from confidence of the favour of the Almighty; a ſure earneſt of future felicity. But by the debauched and the giddy, who have delivered themſelves over ſoul and body to their luſts, and to their vanity, this aptitude, this harmony is not diſcovered. Their fears make them wiſh it may not be

true. Objections are rife in every corner; and, if any inquiry is made into the proofs, it is with an intent to object, and to find them inſufficient.

And one of the main objections is, That there is place for any objection againſt the certainty of revelation. Why, ſay thoſe reaſoners, if it had been the intention of the Almighty, that what is called the revelation of his will ſhould have been believed by all mankind to be ſuch, he would have accompanied it with ſuch evidence as ſhould have been at firſt ſight ſuperior to all objections, and muſt have convinced and converted all infidels: but ſince he has not done ſo, but, on the contrary, room is left for many objections, the concluſion is juſt, that this pretended revelation is none of his. And it muſt be admitted, the inference would be pretty juſt, on ſuppoſal of the propoſition, That it was the intention of the Deity to convince and convert all infidels, however wicked and reprobate. For it is not to be controverted, that it was in the power of the Almighty to have accompanied revelation with conſtant ſtanding miracles, even as it was in his power to have created

created man with a ſmaller ſhare of free-will, and, by perpetual interpoſition of his grace, to have prevented his actual defection from his duty. But upon what principle is it ſuppoſed, that God intended, or ought to have intended, to extend his grace alike to all; to the obſtinate and flagitious, as well as to the ſober and the humble ſinner? The diſcretion of men makes a wide difference between thoſe characters; and how can we be ſure, that the judgment of God does not ſo alſo?

THE mercy of God has provided an atonement ſufficient to expiate the ſins of all mankind, who will take hold of it. The wiſdom of God has contrived evidence ſufficient to convince all mankind, that ſuch atonement is provided, if they will give themſelves the trouble to examine it. But then it is ſo contrived, as to reach with conviction thoſe only who are diſpoſed to take hold of it; that is, the meek and the humble, who are conſcious of their diſtreſs by nature, and deſirous to be delivered from it. And them it reaches, becauſe they think it worth their while to inquire after, and to examine it; whilſt it does not convince, nor indeed can it poſſibly, the proud and the

ſtubborn, who ſlight the atonement provided ſo much, and are ſo thoroughly averſe to comply with the condition upon which it is to be obtained, that, without troubling their heads with the evidence, they inſolently reject the mercy of the Moſt High. Who then can find fault with the divine goodneſs on this article? The meek ſurely will not; and the proud, who have themſelves only to blame, ought not.

So the ſum of the wiſe objection is this, That the good and juſt God did not intend, that ſalvation ſhould reach thoſe deſperately wicked ſinners who refuſed to accept of it. But this objection weighs with thoſe who have never turned their thoughts upon the heinouſneſs of their own guilt; and have formed to themſelves notions of the benignity of the Deity, from the falſe notions of generoſity which they have encouraged in themſelves, laying entirely aſide his juſtice and his purity.

From the ſame ſource ſprings another objection, of equal validity as to revelation, founded on the doctrine of the perpetuity of puniſhment. Here again the incomprehenſible, the infinitely perfect Being, is meaſured by the ſpan of the low, blind, groveling

groveling creature that makes the objection; who, becauſe he cannot comprehend why this juſtice is ſuited to the divine nature, concludes at once, that the doctrine is impoſſible, and therefore falſe; and, in conſequence, rejects the revelation which is ſaid to aſſert it, without giving himſelf the trouble to examine the evidence that ſupports that revelation, or to inquire whether the matter that thus ſhocks him, is really revealed. A careful inquiry might poſſibly ſatisfy him, that the perpetuity of puniſhments is not abſolutely affirmed; and that no more is neceſſarily to be inferred from revelation, than that the miſery of the damned is to endure for ages. But ſuch an inquiry would give him competent ſatisfaction, that the revelation he wantonly rejects, is in very deed the word of God; and would diſpoſe him to believe whatever it clearly declares concerning the Deity and his ways, without conſidering how far that might or might not tally with his conceits.

And herein lies the monſtrous, the ſurpriſing folly of the vain philoſopher. Every new obſervation, every diſcovery, which his ſagacity has been accidentally led to make in nature, and which blows

up

up his pride, becomes to him a freſh proof of his own weakneſs and ſhort-ſightedneſs, and of the immenſity of the Deity, of the perfection of his wiſdom, and of the inſcrutability of his ways to man in his preſent condition: and yet, from his narrow notions, he will pretend to decide what God ought, or ought not, what he can, or cannot do.

In the pittance of the material world which falls within his ken, the obſervations of the infinite wiſdom, contrivance, and power of the Creator, daily grow upon him; new and unaccountable properties in matter, acting by unerring rules, and tending to the perfection of the whole, hourly pour in upon him; the magnet, the microſcope, the teleſcope, the priſm, the air-pump, the crucible, electricity, *&c.* furniſh him with complete evidence, that he knows nothing of the real nature of *matter*, which he ſees, taſtes, and feels, whereof he is in part compoſed, and in which he is at preſent immerſed; and give him undoubted reaſons to conclude, that there may be, or rather that there are numberleſs other properties in matter, and rules of acting which it

ſteadily

ſteadily purſues, of which he at preſent has no knowledge, and poſſibly, ſo long as he is confinded to clay, never can.

By what means then is he to judge of the ſpiritual world, of which he neither has, nor can have any adequate idea? A ſpirit acting in himſelf he feels, and is conſcious of its actings; but what it is compoſed of, or how it acts, is all hidden from him. That there may be as many different claſſes of *ſpirits*, as there are tribes of animals or plants, he dare not deny; though he can have no conception of the manner of their difference, or of the uſes for which they may be in the creation. That the Creator is ſpiritual, he collects with certainty from the aſtoniſhing wiſdom and artifice of ſo much of the univerſe as is diſcloſed to him; that he is good and bountiful in a ſovereign degree, his works declare; and that he is poſſeſſed of all poſſible perfections, his ſelf-exiſtence demonſtrates. But whence comes man to take upon him to determine, what perfection in any of his attributes is; that the juſtice of God muſt go thus far, and no farther; that his mercy requires he ſhould, or ſhould not do this

or

or that; or that his goodneſs ought, or ought not to operate on ſuch an occaſion? This, ſure, is the moſt aſtoniſhing preſumption! Suppoſing him to have an adequate idea of juſtice, mercy, and goodneſs, as thoſe muſt be by the Deity exerciſed in ſupreme harmony, as well as perfection; how dare he preſume to define, how far the exerciſe of either of them may go? Common ſenſe, and that modeſty which ought to attend conſciouſneſs of our dimneſs of ſight, would direct us, when any thing in the ways or will of God appears that we cannot account for, to receive and acquieſce in it with humble ſubmiſſion, and to believe that it is right and juſt.

WHEREFORE, when we ſee the whole brute creation, animate as well as inanimate, purſuing conſtantly, and without erring, the intention of God in their formation; and when we obſerve, in that part of the rational creation which is known to us, the higheſt diſorder and confuſion, rebellion againſt God, injuſtice towards men, fraud and falſhood triumphant, virtue and ſincerity deſpiſed and oppreſſed, and guilt contracted that muſt neceſſarily

neceſſarily terminate in puniſhment, all the conſequence of the freedom of will in man; let us not conclude, as madmen are apt to do, that all actions are indifferent to the Deity, or that no puniſhment is to attend guilt, upon a ſuppoſal, that it would have been unbecoming the benignity of God, who muſt have foreſeen the conſequence of free-will in man, to have brought into the world ſo many millions of rational creatures, who, he foreſaw, muſt become the objects of wrath and puniſhment.

NOTHING is more certain, than that free-will has been the cauſe of tranſgreſſion in man; and that the Deity muſt have foreknown the effects it was to produce. But are we ſure, that, in the ſcale of eſſential juſtice, it was not right and juſt, to have created man in a ſtate of happineſs, with a fitneſs and capacity to preſerve that ſtate, and to acquire one higher, and with a power to chuſe between good and evil; with a ſanction, that, if he preferred evil to good, he muſt bear the diſmal conſequences of that perverſe choice? Do we perfectly know the nature of the ſovereignty and right which the Creator has to diſpoſe of the creatures which he has made? Or are we acquainted with all

the motives that induced the Moſt High to create man ſo qualified? Is it certain, that no good effect, worthy the divine goodneſs, to other parts of the unbounded creation, could have flowed from the fate of man? Or is it clear, that we are intitled to judge of the fitneſs or unfitneſs of any part of God's ways or works, without conſidering the relation it has to, and the effect it has on the whole? Until theſe queſtions meet with ſatisfactory anſwers, nothing can be more ſilly than to conclude as Freethinkers do.

A ſober man, on the contrary, who ſees and laments the diſorders of mankind, will not give up the moral ſenſe of his ſoul as to the merit or demerit of human actions; nor will he give up the juſtice or goodneſs of God, becauſe he cannot preciſely aſſign the motive that induced the Deity to endue man with that proportion of free-will with which he is poſſeſſed. Full conviction of the infinite diſproportion that is between his limited underſtanding, and that of the ſelf-exiſtent Being, leads him to conclude with certainty, that his not being able to comprehend any thing, is not evidence that the Moſt High cannot. He may entertain himſelf

ſelf profitably, at leaſt pleaſantly, in meditating on ſuch ſubjects: but, though his invention ſhould fail of ſolving the difficulty, he will not on that account deny principles, nor impeach the juſtice or goodneſs of his Maker.

THAT the end of God in creating man, endued with free-will, and with that proportion of reaſon, and of appetites, wherewith he was poſſeſſed, was not to diſcover to himſelf what uſe man was to make of thoſe talents, muſt be evident to all who admit the omniſcience and preſcience of the Deity. But it is not ſo evident, that one of the motives of the Creator for framing man ſo qualified, may not have been, to render his his juſtice and his mercy conſpicuous to mankind; and to ſhew thoſe attributes, as well as the effects of free-will left to chuſe between the dictates of reaſon and the bent of appetites, to other claſſes of rational beings, to us at preſent unknown.

HAD all the rational creation unerringly purſued the dictates of reaſon, that is, had they unerringly done their duty, there would have been no occaſion for diſplaying the juſtice or the mercy of God. His immenſity, his eternity, his aſtoniſhing power, good-

goodneſs, and wiſdom, were legible in his works; and it ſeems unreaſonable to doubt, that one of the ends of the creation was, to exhibit to rational creatures complete evidence of thoſe glorious attributes and qualities. But, unleſs ſome rational creature had offended, there could have been no example of juſtice, nor any object for mercy.

BEFORE any treſpaſs committed, every rational being that ſuppoſed revolting againſt ſovereign goodneſs poſſible, muſt have concluded, that the guilty deſerved to be, and would be purſued by the vengeance of the Omnipotent. But in what manner juſtice required that this vengeance ſhould be exerted, it could have no comprehenſion of; far leſs could it have any conception, that eſſential juſtice, ungratefully affronted, ſhould ſuffer thoughts of mercy to interpoſe in behalf of the inſolent offender, and ſhould deviſe a method, conſiſtent with juſtice, to deliver the criminal from puniſhment, and reſtore him to his priſtine favour.

BUT the abuſe of free-will has given occaſion to the manifeſtation of thoſe divine qualities, which otherwiſe might have remained unknown to men and angels, in a light ſo diſtinguiſhed, as muſt needs produce admi-

admiration, with praiſe and adoration, and give a more noble and intereſting idea of the perfection of the Deity.

We know but too well, that man has fallen; and the Scripture acquaints us with the revolt of ſome of the angels. Their crime, we are told, met with inſtant condemnation and puniſhment, but man's with a very different uſage. The convicted and aſhamed offender had hopes of mercy immediately given him. Infinite wiſdom found means to ſatisfy eſſential juſtice, and to make way for the diſplay of mercy, that glorious and adorable attribute of the Moſt High.

The cauſe of this diverſity we can but gueſs at. The weakneſs of man, and the temptations he was liable to, we know; but the condition and temptation of the tranſgreſſing angels we are not acquainted with. If we may however conjecture, their knowledge, capacity, and power was far beyond that of man; and conſequently their defection leſs excuſable: and accordingly we find their condemnation was by ſo much the more prompt and ſevere. Whereas, with reſpect to man, the execution of the

ſentence againſt him was ſuſpended; mercy was offered; a method of reconciliation with the Deity was ſet on foot; repeated intimations were made by the clement Deity of this purpoſe of grace; repeated and renewed inſtitutions were backed by divine authority, to recal men to their duty; the ſovereign and eſſentially juſt Lord of the univerſe was pleaſed to proclaim himſelf merciful and gracious, long-ſuffering and patient; and, through a long ſucceſſion of ages, that declaration has by experience been found to be ſtrictly true. His long-ſuffering, accompanied with continual invitations to accept of pardon, endures to this moment, to the inexpreſſible joy of thoſe that love and fear him; though it muſt at leaſt turn to the utter confuſion of thoſe who heedleſsly or wilfully reject the proffered grace.

In the treatment of the fallen angels, for whom we know no ſhadow of excuſe, nothing but ſtrict juſtice appears. In the treatment of man, the ſeverity of the juſtice of the Eternal is made conſpicuous, chiefly by the atonement which his mercy has provided to expiate the guilt, and avoid

void the puniſhment of unhappy creatures. But that boundleſs pity and compaſſion, that eſſential mercy, and that unwearied patience, which has been, and ſtill is exerciſed towards ungrateful man, could never have appeared to men and angels, if the abuſe of free-will had not given occaſion for the diſplay of it.

IT is idle to inquire, becauſe it ſeems impoſſible to diſcover, what gave occaſion to the revolt of the fallen angels. But it is probable, their ſudden and ſevere puniſhment has prevented treſpaſſes of the like nature. That exertion of the juſtice and power of the Eternal muſt have made a deep impreſſion upon all ſpirits of the angelick order. And, if the rectitude of the remaining choir is owing to the puniſhment of the rebellious crew, who will preſume to find fault with God, for giving angels ſuch a portion of free-will as to leave them fallible, or for reſorting to rigid juſtice for the puniſhment of their offence?

HAD man, upon his firſt offence, been treated as he deſerved; had threatened death immediately followed his crime,

there would have been an end of the ſpecies: but there would have been no inſtance of the mercy, the tender-heartedneſs, the long-ſuffering of the Sovereign Being; none to ſing his praiſes, or to bleſs him, on account of that divine attribute. As his perfect wiſdom and exuberant grace has contrived it, millions of the human race, who have taſted of his goodneſs in this reſpect, feaſt their ſouls on the contemplation of his amazing condeſcendence, and with their whole ſpirit adore and bleſs him.

And if it cannot be doubted, that the end of the formation of myriads of various plants, and other inanimate productions, is, to give to intelligent minds ſome ſort of idea of the wiſdom, the power, and the goodneſs of the Creator; why will conceited men quarrel with the divine œconomy regarding the human race? ſince, without that part of it to which they object, there could have been no tolerable idea of the mercy or the long-ſuffering of the Deity, nor any heart to rejoice, or tongue to bleſs him, on that account.

BUT this reflexion goes ſtill farther. We have heard of other rational creatures, beſides ourſelves, under the appellation of *angels*; ſome of whom fell, as we have done: and we know not whether any, or what diverſity there may be of kinds amongſt them. Thus much however may be concluded, that we cannot with any certainty determine, that there may not be between the ſupreme Being and us a vaſt variety of rational beings diſtinct from the human ſpecies, and differing from it as to the extent of underſtanding, affections, and inclinations; and, conſidering the immenſity of the univerſe, the high probability is, that ſuch beings there are.

NOW, if it may be further ſuppoſed, that thoſe rational beings have any cogniſance of what happens amongſt the children of men, why may we not alſo ſuppoſe, that their information on this grand article was one of the ends in view with the Creator, when man was framed with that capacity to err that brought on the fall?

THAT angels, who are believed to have been formed very pure and perfect, were poſſeſſed

poſſeſſed of free-will, is plain; becauſe they made a bad uſe of it, and fell. And if there are various claſſes of angels, and different ſpecies of ſpiritual or rational beings between the higheſt order of angels and us, their actions muſt, at leaſt, according to our conception of the actions of rational beings, may be determined by choice. And it is impoſſible for us to ſay, what diverſity there may be in the underſtandings and capacities of thoſe different ranks of creatures; what propenſities or inducements to perſevere in purſuing their duty, or what diſpoſitions or temptations to err.

Now, who can tell how many myriads of thoſe creatures may owe the ſtate of felicity they now enjoy, to the correction of the lapſed angels, and to the ſcene of miſery and folly which the conduct of the vain conceited part of mankind has, almoſt ever ſince the creation of this ſyſtem, preſented them with?

If a philoſopher views with juſt contempt the ſcandalous ſprings from which the actions of the vitious proceed, what muſt be the ſenſe of intelligent beings of a ſuperior order? How fooliſh, as well as odious,

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